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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF
BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

ON TO SUCCESS;
OR, THE BOY WHO GOT AHEAD. *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*



Grasping the mother by the elbow and the child around the waist, Jack Haviland leaped down into the swirling waters. Fortunately for the success of the brave boy's efforts, a man swam up and took Mrs. Blake off his hands.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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ON TO SUCCESS

OR,

THE BOY WHO GOT AHEAD

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH SAM DYKE GETS A PORTION OF WHAT IS COMING TO HIM.

"Gee, but this is a heavy load to carry up these cliffs!" exclaimed Jack Haviland, as he shifted a large basket of fish from one shoulder to the other. "I wish that hotel was down by the beach instead of hanging on by its eyelids to Storm Stone Rock, as it is called. I wonder why so many summer visitors flock up here? There are just as good hotels much more convenient to the village and the boat landing. I suppose it's because the air is clearer and more bracing up on these cliffs and the view finer. You can see a long distance over the lake from Storm Stone Rock."

In spite of his burden, Jack strode briskly up the cliff path which led from the little village of Holderness, on the Wisconsin shore of Lake Michigan, to the summer hotel that had been erected the year previous on Storm Stone Rock, the highest point of the beetling cliffs that stretched for some distance along that part of the State, their base laved or pounded, as the case might be, by the waters of the great American lake.

Jack was a strapping fellow of sixteen, with black locks curling over a brow which constant exposure to all kinds of weather had rendered as brown as a berry.

Although a boy in years, he was a man in strength and experience, for on his young shoulders rested the burden

of providing for a family which a tremendous and unexpected gale had left fatherless some fifteen months before.

He was an expert young fisherman, and during the summer had contracts for supplying all the summer hotels and boarding-houses in the neighborhood of the village where he lived—and there were not a few of them.

For an assistant he had the son of a poor carpenter, whom he had trained in the business—a burly, good-natured lad, named Tom Oliver, who was as strong as an ox, and thoroughly devoted to Jack.

So this explains why our hero was tramping up the cliffs with a heavy basket of fish on his shoulder this bright morning in June, which fish were intended for the Storm Stone Rock Hotel, that was already beginning to receive guests for the season.

When halfway up, Jack paused to rest, dropping the basket on a convenient rock.

He removed his cap and wiped the moisture from his heated brow.

In front of him, a hundred feet below, lay spread out the seemingly boundless expanse of the lake, its softly heaving wavelets shimmering in the sunshine.

Along the shore to his left reposed the village of Holderness, with a long stretch of white beach beyond, disappearing around a low headland.

Two or three good-sized summer hotels were to be seen at various points of vantage, while a number of cottages and boarding-places peeped out here and there from amid the foliage on the outskirts of the village.

To the boy's right was the unbroken line of cliffs, in the center of which towered Storm Stone Rock, on which, like an eagle's eyrie, perched the new hotel.

There were little patches of beach at the foot of the cliffs, but no continuous thoroughfare along that part of the shore, which formed a nasty lee shore that was carefully avoided in dirty weather.

About a mile off shore, in the midst of a patch of dangerous reefs which marked the approach to Holderness, was anchored the Gull lightship—a small vessel, looked after by four men, who, in turn, spent one week in every four ashore.

One of these men, a thickset, surly dispositioned man named Levi Dyke, a fisherman by occupation before he joined the crew of the lightship, had been a personal enemy of Jack's father, and was by no means favorably disposed toward the boy himself.

The cause of his enmity lay in the fact that he had been an unsuccessful suitor for the hand of the girl Tom Haviland married, now Jack's mother.

Levi subsequently married a woman who led him a dog's life while she lived, and left him father of a son, christened Sam, who was very like both parents rolled into one, which isn't saying much in his favor.

The other member of the Dyke family was a pretty golden haired girl called Gypsy Dyke—a foundling, who had been picked up somewhere along shore when two years old, by Levi Dyke after a heavy storm.

She had been the drudge of the family ever since she was old enough to be useful, and since the death of the unlamented Mrs. Dyke, took full care of the small house in which Sam Dyke was lord of all he surveyed when his father was on duty at the lightship.

Any girl with a disposition less sunny than Gypsy's would either have run away or collapsed under the blows and abuse to which she was subjected by Sam especially.

Neither fate happened to her.

She had one champion, however, who frequently rescued her from Sam's tyranny.

This was Jack Haviland, who hated to see the strong oppress the weak.

As a consequence Gypsy was intensely grateful to the sturdy young fisherman, and she thought as much of him as though he were her brother.

As Jack was about to pick up the basket of fish preparatory to resuming his climb to the top of the cliff, he heard a girlish scream in the near distance.

"That's Gypsy," he exclaimed, turning his face in the direction whence the sound had come. "I'll bet Sam Dyke is up to some more of his mean tricks. I'd like to punch his face for him."

A frown gathered on the boy's face, and, leaving the basket where it was, he started up a by-path leading to a level spot overgrown with shrubbery.

"Don't, Sam, please don't hit me again. I'll go home if you want me to," Jack heard Gypsy say in pleading accents.

"Shut up, you whinin' little foundlin', or I'll wallop the stuffin' out of yer," floated down the disagreeable voice of Sam Dyke. "Yer ain't got that Haviland feller at yer back now to protect yer, and I'm goin' ter give it ter yer to get square for all back scores he cheated me out of, d'ye understand?"

The words were followed by a blow and a suppressed cry from the girl.

White with anger, Jack dashed forward, clearing the intervening space and, confronting the pair, snatched the switch out of Sam Dyke's hand and brought it down with no light force upon the young rascal's shoulders.

Sam, who was sixteen years of age, and burlier looking than Haviland, gave a roar of pain and sprang backward.

His heels caught in a bit of tangled underbrush and he fell on his back.

"Oh, Jack!" cried Gypsy, with a little shriek of delight, laying one hand confidently on her protector's arm, "I'm so glad to see you."

"And I'm glad I was close at hand to save you from that young brute," replied the boy, encircling the girl's waist with his left arm.

"Yah, you beast!" yelled Sam, sitting up in the bushes. "Jest you wait till dad runs across yer. He's goin' to pay yer for all yer've done to me."

"Why don't you stand up like a man and try to get square yourself?" retorted Jack, contemptuously.

"'Cause yer don't fight fair—that's why," snarled young Dyke. "Yer've got a stick in yer hand."

"There, then," replied Jack, tossing the switch away. "Come on, now, and let us see once for all who is the better boy."

But Sam showed no disposition to accept the challenge.

He knew from past experience who was likely to prove the victor in a game of fistcuffs, and he prudently refrained from accepting a certain whipping.

"Oh, Jack, I don't want you to get into a fight on my account," begged Gypsy.

"Ho!" replied Haviland. "I'm just aching for a chance to polish that young brute off, and I'll do it sooner or later."

"Yah!" snorted Sam Dyke, with a venomous look at his foe. "I'll do yer up yet, see if I don't. I hate yer. I wish you was dead!"

"I dare say you do, you cowardly hound, so you could have a free swing with this unfortunate girl," said Jack, advancing on him with flashing eyes. "Get up and defend yourself. Get up—do you hear?"

Haviland reached down and yanked the struggling young rascal on his feet.

"Now put up your fists, or I'll black both your eyes for you!"

Jack made a feint to hit him, and Sam quickly put himself into a posture of ungainly defense.

The young fisherman then made another bluff lead to draw the coward out.

Sam, feeling he was in a desperate situation, made a sud-

den rush at Jack and succeeded in landing a blow on his chest.

This encouraged him, especially as his opponent backed away, as if not relishing a close encounter.

Sam followed up his seeming advantage by launching out two more blows, one of which nearly landed on Jack's head.

"Darn yer, I kin lick yer, after all," grinned young Dyke, triumphantly. "I'll smash yer good for puttin' yer oar into my affairs."

Gypsy stood back with clasped hands and anxious face to await the issue between the boys.

At that moment Sam made another rush, full of vengeful combativeness.

Then something happened that dissipated his vision of victory.

Biff!

His head went back as though struck by a small pile-driver.

Thump!

He staggered under a blow on his chest.

Swat!

That time he got a sockdolager on the jaw, and with a howl that would have put a famished hyena to the blush he went down again into the bushes, a thoroughly whipped boy.

Those three blows did the business for him, and he did not want any more.

"Oh, my jaw!" he whined. "You've broken my jaw, you beast, and now I can't eat no more. Oh, oh, oh!"

"Get up out of that!" roared Jack. "Get up, or I'll thump you again!"

The threat of more punching had the desired effect.

Sam sprang to his feet, and, with a furious look, darted off down the path by which he had followed Gypsy to brow-beat her.

CHAPTER II.

GYP.

"Go it, you lobster!" shouted Jack after him. "Look out, here I come!"

Sam turned a terrified look over his shoulder to see if he was being followed.

The move was fatal, for he tripped over a small rock and measured his length on the ground, in which he dug a hole with his nose.

The twigs and underbrush scratched his face, too, and he was a sad-looking object when he scrambled to his feet to continue his flight.

Jack laughed gleefully at his enemy's mishap, whereupon Sam, seeing that Haviland had not pursued him, turned and shook his fist back at him.

"I'll fix yer yet," he shouted. "I'll kill yer some day,

darn yer. And I'll wallop the stuffin' outer you, too, Gypsy Dyke, if yer don't come home at once."

"If you dare to lay a hand on her again, and I hear of it," cried Jack, in a tone which showed he meant business, "I'll break every bone in your body the first time I meet you again."

When Sam reached the Dyke cottage he found that his father had just come ashore for a week's lay-off.

He was in the house, drinking with Bill Joyce and Peter Hague, two congenial spirits, also members of the lightship crew, who had rowed him ashore.

"What's the matter with your face?" demanded the senior Dyke, when his precious son entered the kitchen where the three men were seated.

"Fell down and scratched it," replied Sam, sulkily.

"What did you do that for?" roared Levi Dyke, who was just drunk enough to be ugly. "I've a great mind to take a rope's end to you."

Sam, who was afraid of his father, retreated nearer the door, which offered an inviting opportunity for him to make a break if his burly parent attempted to carry out his threat.

"Couldn't help it," replied the boy, sullenly.

"Looks as if he'd been fightin'," grinned Bill Joyce. "Look at that lump on his jaw."

"Have you been fightin', you young whelp?" howled Levi Dyke, making a move to get up and hunt for the thick rope's end he occasionally applied to his hopeful's back, whereupon Sam sprang for the door and laid his hand on the knob. "Have you been fightin', I say?" continued the elder Dyke, furiously. "Why don't you open that meat trap of yours and answer me?"

"Did you get licked?" snickered Peter Hague.

"Yes, I was fightin'," Sam admitted, slowly. "I was fightin' with Jack Haviland."

"Who, roared Levi Dyke, his eyes blazing like live coals.

"Jack Haviland."

"You was fightin' him?"

"I was."

"And he licked you, too, didn't he?" said the man, in a suppressed tone.

"He didn't give me no fair show," protested Sam, who was ashamed to admit a fair defeat in the presence of his father's associates.

"He didn't, eh?"

"No, he didn't."

"What did he do? Did he hit you when you wasn't lookin'?"

"Yes," replied Sam, unblushingly.

"The infernal young whelp! So he took you off your guard and pounded your face like that, did he? Where is he now?"

With a liquor-inflamed countenance, Levi Dyke rose from his chair, as mad as a disturbed hornet.

"Up the cliff talkin' to Gyp."

"Talkin' to Gyp!" cried Levi, furiously. "Didn't I tell her to have nothin' more to do with that monkey, or I'd skin her alive? Didn't you hear me tell her that?"

"Yes, dad; but she don't seem to care what yer say."

"She don't, eh? We'll see about that. But, first I'm goin' to attend to Jack Haviland. I'll dust his jacket for him, the measly cub! I'll let him know that he can't walk over my son."

"That's right, dad," said Sam, leaving the vicinity of the door and coming forward again. "I told him you'd fix him for what he done to me, and he only laughed."

"He laughed, did he? I'll make him laugh on the other side of his mouth. I'll make him dance to the tune of a rope's end."

"He ain't afraid of yer, dad," said Sam, desirous of egging his parent on.

"Oh, he ain't! Did he say that?"

"He as good as said it," replied Sam, to whom a lie of any color was a matter of no importance.

"Look here, Joyce, and you, Hague. Come with me and help give this young monkey the lickin' of his life."

"I'm with yer, Dyke," said Hague, rising with alacrity. Joyce also expressed his willingness to be one of the party.

"Get that piece of rope, Sam, and fetch it along. After we've licked him good and hard we'll dangle him over the cliff and scare him to death. So he said he wasn't afraid of me? We'll see whether he is or not."

In the meantime, all unconscious of the storm that was brewing over his head, Jack was talking to Gypsy Dyke in the hollow of the cliff where Sam had got his knockout.

"Jack," said Gypsy, with great earnestness, "what is a foundling?"

"A foundling! What do you ask that question for, Gyp?" asked the boy, in some surprise.

"Because I want to know what it means."

"A foundling is a child who is picked up somewhere, without any clue as to who its parents are."

"Then that must be me, for Sam calls me a foundling, and so does father."

"I guess so. You know Levi Dyke isn't your father, nor is Sam Dyke your brother. In fact, you're no relation to them at all, I'm glad to say. Everybody in Holderness knows that you were washed ashore from some wreck during a big storm on the lake about twelve years ago, and that Levi Dyke found you in a box attached to a small spar that had been swept into a crevice in the rocks."

"Yes, so Sam has told me. And one day, when he was very angry with me, he said he had a great mind to fling me back into the waves whence I came. I knew I was an orphan, but I did not know before what he meant when he called me a foundling. I thought he meant something cruel when he called me that."

"Well, it's a mean thing for him to be constantly throwing your early misfortune in your face; but, then, I don't think there is anything too mean for Sam Dyke to do or say."

"I wish I was your sister, Jack," said Gypsy, wistfully.

"I wish you was, too," replied the boy, with emphasis.

"I know I'd be very happy, for you'd be good to me.

You wouldn't strike me with a rope's end every little while, like Sam does."

"The little villain!" cried Jack, wrathfully.

"And you wouldn't make me miserable by taunting and teasing me till I felt like jumping into the waves that threw me up on shore before I could remember. You wouldn't do anything like that, Jack, would you?" she said, looking up into his handsome and manly face, that seemed to her young eyes the perfection of goodness.

"I should say not," he replied, taking her pretty face between his two rough and weather-tanned hands. "The Dykes, father and son, are brutes, and it's a wonder to me you don't run away from them."

"Why, where could I go?" she asked, as if the thought had never presented itself to her mind before.

"I know where you could go if the Dykes ever wanted to get rid of you."

"Where?"

"Why, to our house, of course. Mother would welcome you just the same as though you were one of us, and I'd work for you just as I work for mother and my brothers and sisters now. We'd never miss the food you eat. Gyp, for they say there is always enough for one more. I'd love you just as though you was my real sister, and so would mother, for she's the dearest little mother in all the world, Gyp."

"I know she must be, for she's your mother, Jack."

"Thank you for that, Gyp," he said, bending down and kissing her.

She uttered a little cry of surprise, and looked at the boy with such a queer expression that he had to laugh.

"What's the matter, Gyp? Did you think I was going to bite you?"

"No; but no one ever did that before to me. I've seen other people do that when they were pleased about something. It never happened in our home, even when Mother Dyke was living."

"So neither Mother Dyke nor Sam ever kissed you, eh?"

She shook her head with solemn earnestness.

"Well, you haven't lost anything to speak of," he said, with a quiet chuckle. "You didn't mind me kissing you, did you?"

"No; I think I liked it," she answered with shy frankness.

"Then I'll kiss you again, for I've got to leave you now and carry my basket of fish to the hotel on the rock up yonder."

She made no objection to the caress when he repeated it.

He stood and looked at her with a fresh interest, running his fingers through the strands of her soft, wavy hair, that shimmered in the morning sunshine like burnished gold.

It seemed as if a new expression had dawned in her face, which transformed her into a different girl.

Then he left her standing there and went back to his fish, which he shouldered and continued his climb to the top of the cliff.

CHAPTER III.

WHEREIN JACK IS BESIEGED IN THE OBSERVATORY.

When Jack reached the hotel he went around to the steward's quarters.

That functionary was busy at his desk in a little room adjoining the storage-room.

The fish was duly weighed and the boy received an order on the cashier for his pay.

As the cashier was at his desk in the rotunda, where Jack couldn't very well go, the steward sent his assistant to get the order cashed.

When he came back he handed the money to the boy.

Jack tucked it away in an inner pocket and, taking his basket under his arm, left the hotel yard.

On his way back to the downward path by which he had come Jack stopped at a small octagonal building near the edge of the cliff.

It was a single little room, octagonal in shape, mounted on eight posts that raised it about nine feet from the ground.

A flight of narrow stairs communicated with a door in the side looking directly away from the lake.

Each of the other seven sides was provided with a window.

The half-diamond-shaped roof rose to a point beneath the spreading limb of a stout tree, which partially shaded it from the afternoon sun.

As Jack mounted the steps, three men and a boy hove into sight.

The boy was Sam Dyke, and he pointed Jack out to his father and the other two.

The young fisherman did not observe the approach of the enemy until they had arrived close to the observatory.

Then, happening to glance out through the door, he saw Levi Dyke and the two men with ropes in their hands, and Sam bringing up the rear, with a coil of stout line slung over his shoulder.

The whole aspect of the newcomers was menacing, and the fact that Sam was with them convinced Jack that he was the object they were after.

If he had entertained the slightest doubt of this fact, it was dissipated when Levi Dyke led the forces to the foot of the stairs and ordered Haviland to come out of the observatory.

"What do you want with me?" asked Jack, standing in the doorway.

Before his father could make a reply, Sam yelled out, with a grin of satisfaction:

"We're goin' to knock the stuffin' out of yer."

That was a rather startling intimation of trouble, and, after Jack had calmly surveyed his enemies, he was willing to believe that they meant business.

"Are you comin' down, or must we come up there and get you?" roared Levi Dyke, in the tone of an officer commanding a fortress to surrender or take the consequences.

Jack had a strong objection to either of the suggestions offered by the elder Dyke, for he easily guessed what he would be up against the moment they laid their hands upon him.

He would be like the common people in the grasp of the trusts.

"No," he said; "I'm not coming down."

"Then we'll fetch you down, and we'll lick you twice as hard for givin' us the trouble of goin' after you," said Dyke, senior.

"Better keep back," replied Jack, picking up a heavy Malacca cane that stood within his reach. "I'm not going to be whipped if I can help myself. And I warn you that I'll give you all the fight you want."

He looked cool and determined, and the besiegers did not like his attitude for a cent.

However, they did not dream for a moment that one boy, though a stout one, would be able to stand them off even a little bit.

The width of the stairs would only permit of the enemy to advance in single file, and this was of advantage to Jack, who figured that he would be able to knock them out as fast as they came up.

He did not mean to seriously injure them if he could avoid doing so, but he was determined, at all hazards, to resist capture.

Levi Dyke, being sufficiently primed with liquor to make him uncommonly bold, led the assault, with Joyce and Hague close behind, while Sam prudently remained on the ground, an interested observer of the proceedings.

As Levi dashed up the stairs and made a rush for the door, Jack fetched him a rap alongside the head that made him think the observatory had fallen in and buried him in the debris.

He tumbled back upon Joyce, who in turn collided with Hague, and the result was the three besiegers tumbled backward down the stairs and landed in a heap at the bottom, to their own chagrin and Sam's amazement.

Jack felt like laughing when he saw how easily he had upset both their calculations and themselves.

When they picked themselves up they were a mighty mad trio, and each said things that would not bear repeating.

Levi intimated in very forcible terms that what they wouldn't do to Haviland when they laid their hands on him was not worth mentioning.

They formed in line for a second attack, with Joyce in the lead, but this time they proceeded with more caution.

Jack awaited the assault as deliberately as before, and when Joyce got within easy reach he made a feint to strike him as he had done Levi Dyke, and the man ducked, as the boy expected he would.

Then quick as a wink he fetched Joyce an awful jab in the stomach, and back he went on Hague, who slipped and fell upon Dyke, senior, and once more they had to extricate themselves from a confused jumble at the foot of the stairs.

They held an angry consultation as to what should be

done next, for it seemed plain that a direct attack had its disadvantages.

The result of the confab was that it was decided to put Sam in the lead to bear the brunt, on the supposition that Haviland wouldn't hit him as hard as he had the men.

"I don't want to go up first," strenuously objected Sam. "He'll kill me with that cane."

"He wouldn't dare," replied his father, reassuringly.

"I wouldn't trust him."

"Well, you've got to lead the way, whether you like it or not," cried Levi Dyke, seizing his son by the ear and marching him to the foot of the stairs.

Sam roared and kicked, and gave the besiegers no end of trouble.

While the enemy was in a state of temporary confusion, Jack wondered if he could not play a march on them by leaving the observatory unnoticed.

He figured that he could pass out of the front window and climb to the roof of the building, from which the overhanging branches of the tree close by would afford him the means of reaching the ground.

The only difficulty in the way was that the enemy would be able to reach the foot of the tree before he could, and thus cut off his retreat.

"I'm afraid it won't work," thought Jack, after considering the matter for a moment or two. "However, I might change my base of operations to the tree, anyway. It would be harder for them to dislodge me from that crotch in the trunk than from this place. If I stay here I'll either have to seriously maim one or more of them, or give up the fight. I'd rather not do either."

Before Jack was ready to retreat to the shelter of the tree the attacking party had formed once more, with the reluctant and frightened Sam at their head.

"We'll give you another chance," cried Levi Dyke. "Come down, and we'll only give you half the lickin' we intended to serve out to you."

This bait was not alluring enough to catch Jack.

He did not want even half a licking, nor did he put any trust in the promise of Dyke, senior.

If he could not retreat to the tree, he proposed to fight it out on that line, if it took all day.

"No," he replied, "I won't surrender."

"Then we'll wallop the daylights out of you," replied Levi Dyke.

"All right. Then I'll have to knock Sam's brains out as soon as he gets within reach," answered Jack, determinedly.

He said this to demoralize the junior Dyke, and he fully succeeded.

"I told you he means to kill me, dad," he roared, struggling in vain to escape from the encircling arms of Hague, who was urging him forward with a boost.

As Sam was pushed forward step by step, he yelled murder at the top of his voice.

Two or three of the hotel guests heard the uproar and came toward the observatory to find out what the trouble was.

Jack swung his cane to and fro with such a vicious sweep that Hague became fearful that he would scatter Sam's brains over the stairs, and he refused to push the boy within the perilous circle.

Levi Dyke stormed and swore, and finally attempted to create a diversion by climbing up the railing of the stairs, so as to get on a level with the besieged lad.

Jack waited till he got close enough, and then pounded his fingers with the stick till he let go and dropped to the ground, at the same time keeping a wary eye on Hague and Sam.

By this time the three guests came up and began to inquire into the cause of the rumpus.

This took the rascals' attention away from Jack, and the boy decided to beat a retreat from the observatory.

As a preliminary to the venture he slammed the door of the building to and placed the cane against it to hold it shut.

Then he climbed out of the window overlooking the lake and scrambled to the peaked roof.

From the roof he climbed into the branches of the big tree that overshadowed it and moved down to the central crotch.

Perching himself securely in his new retreat, Jack paused to examine the situation again.

To his surprise, the enemy gave no sign of having observed his change of base.

Levi Dyke was trying to impress the fact upon the hotel visitors that he and his associates were in the right.

As Jack had no voice in the proceedings, the guests were unable to fully decide the question; but, as it was none of their business, they prudently made no effort to interfere.

At this stage of the matter a bright idea struck Hague.

He suggested that, while he and Joyce made an assault on the door, Dyke, senior, should take his son around to the front and boost him into the window.

He calculated that, thus placed between two fires, the besieged would surely be captured.

Unfortunately for the success of the scheme, which was not a bad one, the ideas came too late to be of any value, for the bird had flown the coop.

They did not know that, however, and the four, tickled at the prospects of capturing the boy they were after, proceeded to carry the plan into operation.

Jack watched them with a chuckle of satisfaction.

"I got out of that place just in time," he said to himself, as he perceived the strategic move that had been adopted by the enemy.

All being ready, the two lightship men rushed up the stairs, while Levi Dyke shoved his son up to the front window.

The door yielded to the assault, and Joyce and Hague dashed into the observatory with arms extended to grasp Haviland, just as Sam's face reached above the level of the window sill.

Then blank amazement rested on their faces.

The observatory was empty.

CHAPTER IV.

DESCRIBES HOW JACK ELUDES HIS ENEMIES.

The moment Joyce and Hague entered the observatory, Jack Haviland decided that the auspicious moment had arrived for him to retreat from the scene.

Even if Levi Dyke discovered him in the act of leaving the shelter of the trees, he was so burdened by the weight of his son that several moments must elapse before he could chase him.

So down the tree trunk scrambled Jack, and off he started at full speed for the path down the cliff.

Levi saw him directly and let out a yell of warning.

He yanked Sam down with so much energy that the boy lost his balance and came tumbling to the ground, striking on his head and shoulders, which brought forth a yell loud enough to wake the dead.

Joyce and Hague came dashing out of the observatory in time to see Jack running along the edge of the cliffs.

The three men started after him in hot pursuit.

Although the boy had got a good start, he was not out of danger by any means.

His pursuers were tough seamen, wiry and active as cats, and either of them would have been more than a match for him if it came to a hand-to-hand encounter.

Jack looked back as he ran, and saw that the men were closing in on him, and that he would have to put his best foot forward if he wished to elude them.

He was pretty confident in his own running powers, for not a boy in Holderness could compete with him in point of speed.

He soon found, however, to his great dismay, that Bill Joyce was faster.

The rascal was bound to overhaul him before he could reach the path.

Jack possessed one advantage over his pursuers, which was that he knew every inch of the cliffs which he would have to traverse in order to place himself out of danger, and he rapidly made up his mind to head for a certain point from which he could make his way down to a cave known as the "Gull's Nest," with the labyrinths of which very few people were acquainted.

As the fugitive neared the point for which he was heading, he saw that it would be touch and go with him whether or not he could outspurt the agile Joyce.

He strained every nerve to reach the desired point, and, by dint of a tremendous spurt, managed to achieve his object while the lightship man was still a dozen yards away from him.

As this point the cliffs were fully a hundred and fifty feet high, and went almost sheer down to the water, which lay calm and deep below, like a great mill-pond.

To the casual eye it would have seemed an impossibility to descend the cliff at this point, but Jack, as we said before, was well acquainted with the difficulties of the descent, and knew that, even if he was followed, if he could get past

a certain point safely, he would be beyond reach of his pursuers.

Jack hastily swung himself over the edge of the cliff, and, taking advantage of every root, bush and projection, rapidly placed a considerable distance between himself and the summit.

Joyce arrived at the spot the boy had just quitted and came to a pause.

The idea of following Haviland down that sheer surface did not appeal to him with sufficient weight to induce him to attempt it.

Levi Dyke and Hague presently came up, and they gazed down at the nervy boy.

"I guess we'll have to give it up as a bad job," remarked Joyce. "I wouldn't go down there after him for a wad of money."

"Give up nothin'," growled Levi, swiftly marking the progress of Haviland. "I'm goin' after him myself, and I'll catch him, too."

Levi Dyke knew a good bit about that cliff himself.

He knew practically every point of vantage Jack would have to avail himself of.

And his knowledge showed him how, by the aid of the long rope Sam was bringing up, he could quickly have himself lowered down the face of the cliff to a point where he would be able to intercept the fugitive.

He motioned to his son to hurry, and Sam came up on the run.

Levi hastily proceeded to fasten one end of the line round his waist.

"If I can get a grip on that young cub," he said, "I'll make him smart for them cracks he gave me on the flippers, and all the trouble he's given the whole of us to overhaul him. Now, you, Joyce and Hague, lower away, and mind you hold tight to that line. When I get hold of him, haul for all you're worth, d'ye hear?"

"Ay, ay, Levi," answered both men in a breath.

By this time Jack had reached a broad ledge which stood out from the cliff.

He had to drop from here to another and narrower ledge, and thence proceed with the utmost caution to slide down to a natural footpath which led to the mouth of the "Gull's Nest."

From this footpath the cliff went straight down to the beach—one smooth slab of rock.

When Jack reached the broad ledge already mentioned, he looked up and saw that the burly form of Levi Dyke was being lowered by means of a rope.

It took but a slight calculation for him to understand that Dyke would reach him long before he could arrive at the footpath.

What could he do now in the face of certain capture?

"I'm afraid that rope has cooked my goose," he breathed disconsolately. "It is too bad, when I felt so sure of giving them the slip."

Like a drowning man grasping at a straw, he gazed in the opposite direction along the face of the cliff.

It was as bare and as steep as the side of a house.

There was no chance to escape in that direction.

Evidently he was cornered, and he pictured to himself the triumph of his enemies after he had been hauled back to the ground above.

He could easily guess what would follow—a flogging, the like of which he had never experienced in his life.

The mere idea of his utter helplessness made him set his teeth together and look down in the direction of the beach.

It lay over one hundred feet a little to the right.

But directly beneath and in front of him he knew the water was very deep and without obstructions.

Instantly he resolved what he would do.

He would jump into the lake.

Sam Dyke, with a grin of delight, was bending over the edge of the cliff, intently watching the fugitive, and directing the paying out of the rope that brought his father closer and closer upon his prey.

"We've got him," he shrieked, in a tone of satisfaction, as he saw his father reach down to grasp Jack's collar.

But he was mistaken, for Haviland jerked himself to one side and leaped straight out into mid-air.

Keeping his body perfectly stiff, he shot through the intervening space, and fell into the lake with a splash that sent all the gulls in the neighborhood screaming away.

Spellbound, Sam Dyke and the two men above, as well as Levi himself, gazed at the spot where Jack fell, feeling pretty certain that he had met his death by adopting such desperate means to avoid falling into their clutches.

But Jack was a first-rate diver and swimmer, and a few seconds after he disappeared he rose to the surface of the water and struck out for the nearby patch of beach.

Levi Dyke was hauled back to the top of the cliff, and vented his disappointment with a string of imprecations not pleasant to listen to.

He shook his ponderous fist at the swimming boy, and swore he would yet get even with the daring lad.

And while the rascals were lamenting over their vanished revenge, Jack gained the bit of beach and sat down on a rock to regain his breath.

He looked up at the ledge from which he had jumped, and now realized that he had taken a pretty desperate chance.

The four figures standing on the edge of the cliff fifty feet above looked much further to his eyes.

He could imagine they were awfully angry and disappointed, and he chuckled gleefully to think how he had balked them at the very moment they thought their prize was within their grasp.

CHAPTER V.

TREATS OF A CONVERSATION THAT JACK OVERHEARD.

When Jack had fully rested himself he got up and prepared to make his way to Holderness along the base of the cliffs.

There were patches of beach at intervals, but, as we have already mentioned, no continuous footway, and Jack was obliged to take to the water several times before he reached the beach proper.

This was no great inconvenience to him, as he was already well soaked, and a little more water was a matter of no moment to him.

Having reached a sheltered nook within half a mile of the village, Jack removed his clothes and spread them out on a big rock at the foot of the cliff to dry.

He then buried himself, all but his head, in the soft, warm sand, and began to consider how he should avoid a subsequent encounter with the burly Levi Dyke.

While he was thus employed, two men approached the spot and sat down on a rock within earshot of him.

One of these Jack recognized as Isaac Naylor, a lawyer, and the richest man in Holderness.

He was president of the Lake Michigan Navigation Company, which during the summer ran a boat on alternate days between Milwaukee and Holderness for the special accommodation of the summer traffic.

He was a large man, of perhaps forty years, with a cold, calculating eye and saturnine features.

The other man was Amos Flint, his chief clerk and general man of business.

He was slight and wiry, and wore his black coat buttoned close about him.

"Of course you understand, Mr. Flint," Mr. Naylor was saying, "that this new arrangement of the Milwaukee Steamboat Company to run a boat to this place this summer is going to interfere with the interests of the Lake Michigan Navigation Company, of which I am the principal owner."

"Certainly, sir," replied his companion, obsequiously; "so I told Mrs. Flint and the little Flints, when I saw that the bills announcing the fact had been posted in all the public places."

"In spite of my persistent opposition these people have secured the right to use the steamboat wharf this season, and this letter, which I have just received from our Milwaukee agent, informs me that their new boat, the Sylph, will make her first trip up to-day. She is due here at five-thirty this afternoon."

"Very good, sir—that is, I mean very bad, sir," replied his clerk.

It is intolerable, Mr. Flint, now that Holderness has developed into the most popular resort on the lake, that a rival should cut into the business that rightfully belongs to the Lake Michigan Navigation Company."

"Exactly what I told Mrs. Flint and the little Flints this morning, sir."

"Now, mark you, sir, I don't propose to allow the Milwaukee Steamboat Company to ride roughshod over me," said Mr. Naylor, nodding his head in a very determined way.

"Quite right, sir."

"It struck me that if something were to happen—some-

thing, mind you, that would shake the confidence of the public in this new line—it would be to our advantage.”

“To our advantage—yes, sir.”

“Well, I propose that something shall happen.”

“Yes, sir—if something only would, sir.”

“By the way, Mr. Flint, you have called at the office of the Holderness Oil and Gasoline Works several times during the last two weeks to renew the contract for carrying their product, haven’t you?”

“Certainly, sir.”

“You didn’t succeed in getting the manager’s signature to our printed form, did you?”

“No, sir. I regret——”

“Of course you do, Mr. Flint. You regret to say that the company has just signed with the opposition steamboat company, which throws us out in the cold with regard to a very considerable amount of freight that we had counted upon.”

“Yes, sir.”

“When the Sylph leaves the wharf to-morrow morning on her return trip I understand that she will carry fifty barrels of gasoline and oil. Do you follow me?”

“Certainly, sir. I am all attention.”

“Now, Mr. Flint, if that oil was to catch fire in some mysterious way when the steamboat was well on her way to Milwaukee, what would happen?”

“She’d burn up, wouldn’t she, sir?”

“I think the chances are about a hundred to one that she would,” replied Mr. Naylor, dryly.

“That would be a most unfortunate catastrophe, sir.”

“Undoubtedly—for the Milwaukee Steamboat Company. They’d lose their new boat, and probably the confidence of the public.

“Very true, sir.”

“And the Lake Michigan Navigation Company would be the gainer.”

“That’s right, sir. But such a thing is not likely to happen, sir.”

“Oh, accidents are liable to happen on board any steamer at the most unexpected time. I dare say you remember how the City of Chicago took fire in the middle of the lake three years ago and burned to the water’s edge?”

“Yes, sir; I remember the lamentable occurrence. Over a hundred lives were lost on that occasion.”

“I believe so,” responded the lawyer, carelessly. “Well, Mr. Flint, what happened to the City of Chicago might happen to the Sylph.”

“Quite true, sir, it might; but——”

“You think such a catastrophe very remote, eh?” said Mr. Naylor, slyly.

“That is what I was about to observe, sir.”

“Now, Mr. Flint, suppose I were to send you to Milwaukee to-morrow morning on business.”

“On business, sir!”

“Precisely—on business. And you were to take passage on the Sylph.”

“On the Sylph! Why, sir, you wouldn’t have me patronize the opposition——”

“Attend to me, Mr. Flint,” interrupted Mr. Naylor, impatiently.

“I am attending, sir.”

“I said suppose you were to take passage on the Sylph, because you know that she is a faster and newer boat than the Holderness, and consequently would land you in Milwaukee sooner than if you went by the old-established line.”

“Yes, sir; but——” began the clerk, in a puzzled way.

“Don’t interrupt me, Mr. Flint,” went on Mr. Naylor, in a brusque way. “Suppose, I say, you were to do this, and that while on board you casually walked down on to the freight deck, and your curiosity should induce you to stroll to where the gasoline barrels were piled. Do you follow me?”

“Certainly, sir,” hastily answered the clerk, who had not a very clear idea what his employer was trying to get at.

“I believe you smoke, Mr. Flint?”

“Yes, sir; but Mrs. Flint and the little——”

“Never mind about your family, sir,” said Mr. Naylor, testily. “As you smoke, it would be the most natural thing in the world for you to light a cigar——”

“Not near the oil barrels, sir.”

“Why not?” demanded the lawyer, sharply.

“Mr. Flint, it seems to me you are singularly dense this morning.”

“I hope not, sir. Mrs. Flint said——”

“Will you kindly leave Mrs. Flint out of this matter, sir?”

“Certainly, sir. I was only about to observe that——”

“But I don’t want to hear what you were about to observe. Attend to me, please. It is my purpose that you do take the Sylph for Milwaukee to-morrow morning; that you do go down to the freight deck; that when you locate the gasoline barrels you light a cigar close to one of them, through the bung of which you had previously bored a hole with a large gimlet and inserted a piece of fuse, to the outer end of which you apply the flame of a match with which you had lighted your cigar; and then you walk away and leave the fuse to do the rest. Do you understand me?”

“Why, sir, that would be a felony, sir!” gasped the clerk, with a white face.

“What of it, Mr. Flint?” asked the lawyer, coldly. “You would be working in the interests of the Lake Michigan Navigation Company; wouldn’t you?”

“Yes, sir, replied the clerk, faintly; but——”

“Will you attend to me? I need scarcely remind you that our interests are to a certain extent identical. If the Milwaukee Steamboat Company runs the Navigation Company out of business, as it threatens to do, you will lose a fat job, Mr. Flint. Therefore you see how necessary it is that we pull together. You are the only person I dare trust with an enterprise of this nature, for you are practically under my thumb. I can send you to State prison at any time for that little bit of forg——”

"Oh, Lor'! don't mention that, sir. I'll do anything you order, sir," agreed the clerk, in a fright.

"I thought you would, Mr. Flint," replied the lawyer, grimly.

"But, sir, this is a very serious matter for me to undertake. If I should be detected, what would become of Mrs. Flint and the little Flints?"

"You mustn't be detected, Mr. Flint. That would ruin everything."

"It would ruin me, sir," replied the clerk, dolefully. "I should be pretty roughly handled, and put in jail, and tried and convicted, and—oh, Lor'! the very idea of it puts me in a cold sweat."

"Pshaw! Nothing of the kind will happen if you are cautious."

"But there's another thing that you haven't considered, sir."

"What is that?"

"Supposing I do set the boat afire, and she burns and goes to the bottom?"

"Well," impatiently.

"How am I going to get ashore?"

"In one of the boats with the other passengers, of course."

"But suppose——"

"That will do, Mr. Flint. Are you going to carry this scheme out for me, or must I produce that paper with the forged——"

"I'll do it, sir," replied the clerk, hastily. "I hope you will allow me something extra as a compensation for the risk I'm taking. It would kind of ease my conscience——"

"Your what?"

"My conscience, sir. The inward monitor that——"

"Humph! If I were you, Mr. Flint, I'd get rid of it. 'Tis only a drawback to a man in your position. Well, I have no objection to paying you the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars as a bonus if you do the job up to the handle."

"Thank you, sir. It will buy Mrs. Flint and the little Flints—oh, Lor'! what was that?"

Jack Haviland, who had been an attentive listener to the diabolical scheme in question, had inadvertently sneezed and attracted to him the attention of both Mr. Isaac Naylor and his rascally clerk.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRICE OF SILENCE.

Mr. Naylor sprang to his feet with an exclamation that did not sound well from the lips of a man of his standing in the community.

Both he and Mr. Flint gazed almost stupefied at the naked figure of Jack Haviland as it emerged from the sand and then squatted within a couple of yards of them.

Jack did not open his mouth, but coolly waited for some move on the part of the men before him.

It was a moment or two before Mr. Naylor spoke, and then his tone was harsh and menacing.

"So, young man, you've been listening to our conversation, have you?" he said, his hard eyes emitting a steely flash.

"I won't deny that fact, sir," answered the boy, calmly.

"How long have you been playing the eavesdropper?" continued Mr. Naylor, with an ugly sneer.

Jack did not like the way in which he put the question and remained silent.

"How long have you been here?" demanded Mr. Naylor, in a compressed tone.

"Ever since you two came and sat on that rock."

"Mr. Naylor took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the drops of moisture from his brow.

He realized that he was in a very serious position.

"Then you heard every word we said?" he remarked hoarsely.

"Every word," coolly responded Jack, who fully realized the import of the conversation, and consequently felt little respect or consideration for the man who had planned the destruction of the new boat of the opposition steamboat line.

As for Mr. Flint, he simply looked paralyzed with terror.

In his mind's eye a prison cell rose before him, and he wanted to fly from the neighborhood as fast as his skinny limbs would carry him.

Mr. Naylor did not ask Jack what had brought him to that secluded spot. His nakedness, and his clothes spread out on the rock, seemed to indicate a very natural conclusion—that the boy had been in swimming.

The president and principal owner of the Lake Michigan Navigation Company saw that the boy, whom he recognized as Jack Haviland, the young fisherman of Holderness, had him in his power, and could ruin him if he chose to speak.

Mr. Naylor, however, was a resourceful rascal—the word applied to him in spite of his good clothes and respectable reputation—and he did not for an instant lose his head under the ticklish circumstances.

"You'd better dress yourself, young man," he said calmly. "I'd like to have a few words with you."

Jack was not particularly desirous of having any conversation with the rich man of Holderness, but he had no objection at all to dressing himself, for he felt that he was placed at considerable disadvantage in his unclothed state.

While he was dressing himself Mr. Naylor and his man Flint talked together in a low tone, and before Jack got his jacket on the clerk walked off toward the village at a rapid pace.

Mr. Flint strode up and down in front of the rock on which he and his clerk had been sitting.

He was carefully considering how he should deal with the boy.

He was prepared to offer him a considerable bribe to secure his silence, and, as he believed almost everybody has

his price, he did not doubt but he could buy a poor fishing lad.

There are some things in this world that cannot be bought, however—an honest, upright heart, for instance—and Mr. Naylor's confidence in the purchasing power of money was about to receive a rude jolt.

At length, Jack, seeing that he could not well avoid what he doubted not must prove an unsatisfactory interview, approached the magnate of Holderness.

"Well, sir," he said, rather coldly, "what is it you wish to say to me?"

Before he opened his mouth, Mr. Naylor studied his face for a moment through his half-shut eyes, as though weighing up every feature of the boy's frank and open countenance, but found nothing in it to encourage him.

"I wish to know whether we can come to an understanding with reference to what you heard Mr. Flint and myself talking about," said the rich man.

"What do you mean by an understanding?" asked Jack.

"Well, you overheard the details of a little plan that I contemplated putting into execution, but which, under the present circumstances, I will be obliged to abandon. If you should tell the story about the village I should feel bound to deny and ridicule it, of course, and Mr. Flint would back me up. Our united denials would undoubtedly have more weight than your unsupported testimony. Still, the story would greatly embarrass me. Therefore I prefer that it should not get out. Do you think that two hundred and fifty dollars would put a seal on your mouth?"

Jack's lips curled scornfully.

"No, sir, I do not," he replied promptly.

Mr. Naylor bits his lips, and the steely hue of his eyes grew harder.

"Perhaps if I make it five hundred dollars——"

"No, sir," interrupted Jack. "I wish you to understand that I am not for sale."

"No?" answered the president of the navigation company, with a palpable sneer.

"No," returned the boy, in an earnest tone.

"Indeed," said Mr. Naylor, almost incredulously, "you seem to be a model young chap—for a fisher boy."

"I do not claim to be better than my associates, Mr. Naylor," replied Haviland. "I believe every decent boy would scorn the proposition you have suggested."

"You do, eh? Fine words to mask your blackmailing intentions."

"I am no blackmailer, Mr. Naylor."

"Do you mean to tell me that you refuse the sum of five hundred dollars without any idea of bleeding me by degrees for many times that sum?"

"That is just what I mean."

"Excuse me, young man, if I disbelieve you. It isn't in keeping with human nature. The principle is inborn in every one to get all he can in the easiest way within his reach. You have managed to get me on the hip, so to speak. To a certain extent I am in your power. There isn't a man, or a boy, either, who wouldn't push such an advantage to

the limit. Don't think to deceive a man of my years and experience. I know the world, for I've been up against it for over forty years. We might as well understand each other first as last. Name the price of your silence."

"Very well, sir. I will name it."

"I thought we'd come to terms," replied the rich man, with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

"The price of my silence is that you give up this villainous project against the steamboat Sylph."

Mr. Naylor looked at Jack with unfeigned surprise.

"What else?" he asked, almost sharply.

"Nothing else."

"Nothing else?" ejaculated the magnate of Holderness, as though he could not believe the evidence of his senses.

"Nothing else," repeated the boy.

"Do you mean to say you won't accept five hundred dollars from me as a—ahem!—present?"

"No, sir. You have the only terms by which I am willing to keep my mouth shut."

Mr. Naylor regarded Jack as a professor might look at some new specimen of the animal kingdom that had unexpectedly come under his observation.

"You mean that, do you?" he said, rather doubtfully.

"This is not some trick to cover a subsequent move on your part?"

"I mean just what I have said. You have the reputation of being the wealthiest man in Holderness. Well, you haven't money enough to bribe me to hold my tongue so that you might safely try to carry out the scheme that you proposed to your clerk. The destruction of the Sylph in mid-lake means the possible loss of many lives. Have you weighed that fact in your calculations? If I told what I know, I could block your game, anyway, Mr. Naylor, and you know it. Well, I have no particular interest in holding you up as a mark for suspicion, so I will say nothing if you will give me your word that you will drop all plans you may have against the Milwaukee Steamboat Company."

"Very well," replied Mr. Naylor, "I'll take you at your word. I'll agree to your terms. It may spell ruin for me, but I don't see that I can help myself. Is that satisfactory to you?"

"It is."

"Then shake hands on it."

"No, sir. I prefer not to."

"Proud, are you?" replied the magnate, sneeringly.

"Perhaps so," answered the boy. "But that is my business."

If a look could have killed Haviland at that moment, the steely flash of the rich man's eye would have stretched him dead there on the beach.

"You can go," he said harshly.

Jack was glad to avail himself of the chance to leave the man.

"So, you are a boy without price, are you?" grated Mr. Naylor, watching the retreating form of the noble boy.

"You have the nerve to dictate terms to me, eh? Well, we shall see, my lad. I am not a man to be easily turned from

a purpose. The Sylph is a thorn in my side that I intend to pluck out in spite of a hundred boys of your caliber. A few successful trips made by that boat would put the Lake Michigan Navigation Company out of business. I suppose I must stand aside and see the business I have built up go to my rival. Not if I know myself, and I think I do. I will have to take measures to ensure your silence in the way that will redound best to my advantage. You have made me your enemy, my lad, and it is the worst day's work for yourself that you ever did in your life."

With these words, Isaac Naylor followed the steps of the boy who in every respect save worldly position was infinitely his superior.

CHAPTER VII.

ON BOARD THE LAKE BIRD.

The arrival of the Sylph, the new boat of the Milwaukee Steamboat Company, occasioned quite a little excitement in the village of Holderness.

She made fast to the main wharf in front of the village at half-past five that afternoon, on time to the minute, and quite a number of summer visitors came on her and scattered to the various hotels and boarding-houses in the neighborhood.

Jack Haviland was among the crowd of natives who gathered on the dock to admire the steamer, which was thoroughly up to date in every particular, and rather cast the Holderness, the regular boat, in the shade.

The pilot of the boat was an old friend of the Haviland family, and as soon as he saw Jack on the wharf he invited him aboard, and then proceeded to show the boy, for whom he had a considerable fondness, over the craft fore and aft.

"She's a fine boat, Mr. Morgan," said Jack, enthusiastically, when they walked ashore.

"There's none finer of her size and build on the lake," replied the pilot.

"She makes the Holderness look like thirty cents."

"Indeed she does."

"You brought quite a crowd up with you, and some considerable freight."

"Yes. We did uncommonly well for a first trip, and so early in the season. We didn't leave much for the other boat, though she thought to get ahead of us by starting an hour earlier from Milwaukee. As it was, we passed her shortly after noon as though she was lying to."

"I guess the Holderness isn't in it with the Sylph."

"Not even a little bit, Jack."

"Then it seems to me that the only chance the Lake Michigan Navigation Company has is to run its boat on alternate days with the Sylph. That ought to give Mr. Naylor a share, at any rate, of the traffic between here and Milwaukee."

"That was the proposition made by the Milwaukee Steamboat Company to its rival, in order to do away with

extreme competition, when it first proposed to put a boat on this route. Mr. Naylor, who practically owns all the stock of the other line, wouldn't hear of such a thing. He'll find that he'll have to adopt it or suffer the consequences."

"I've heard that your company has the contract for carrying the products of the Holderness Oil and Gasoline Works to Milwaukee," said Jack.

"I don't know anything about that, Jack. I am not specially curious about anything not within the line of my duty."

"I should think the traveling public would object to such hazardous freight."

"Oh, I dare say it will be well looked after," said the pilot. "The company will not take any chances with such stuff. I have no doubt it is profitable to transport, or the steamboat people wouldn't handle it. Well, how is the fishing business coming on, Jack?"

"First class. This looks as if it was going to be a banner year for me. There are two new hotels and half a dozen new boarding-houses. I've got them all. As soon as the season is well under way I shall have my hands full keeping up with my orders."

"I suppose you've got Tom Oliver well broken in by this time?"

"Yes; he picked up things fast. We make a good team."

"You can depend on him, under any circumstances, for he told me there wasn't anything he wouldn't do for you."

"Tom is all right. I've given him an interest in the business, and will increase it next year. I like Tom first rate."

"When do you go out again, Jack?"

"Early to-morrow morning, if the wind serves."

"Well, tell you mother I'll drop in and see her when I get the chance."

"I will. She'll be glad to see you, Mr. Morgan."

They parted at one of the street corners, and Jack turned his steps homeward.

Halfway up the street he spied Sam Dyke coming out of a saloon with a bottle done up in a piece of paper in his hand.

That worthy, however, saw him, too, and darted back into the drinking-place, where he waited until Jack had passed by.

After an early tea, Haviland went down to the small private wharf and rowed out to his fishing sloop, the Lake Bird, which was about all the property, outside of the cottage and a small patch of ground surrounding it, that Tom Haviland left his family when that unfortunate gale closed his earthly account.

He started to put the boat in order for their next cruise to the fishing grounds in the northern end of the lake.

While thus engaged he was hailed from the shore.

He recognized his assistant's voice, and, jumping into the rowboat, pulled for the wharf.

"Hello, Tom," he said cheerily. "I see you're on hand."

"Yes," grinned Oliver; "I'm always turning up, like a bad penny."

"You don't want to compare yourself to a spurious coin, Tom. You've got the ring of true metal, every time."

"I hope there's nothin' mean about me, at any rate, Jack," replied the husky lad, stepping into the boat.

"I'll bet there isn't, Tom. You're all right."

"Glad to hear it."

"I'm just as well pleased that you came over, though there wasn't any real necessity of you doing so."

"There wasn't nothin' doin' at home, so I thought I'd drop over and make myself useful if there was anythin' for me to do."

"I guess you can find something to keep you out of mischief," said Jack, as he pulled in his oars and grabbed the rail of the Lake Bird. "Hop aboard."

They were soon busy scrubbing up the deck and cleaning out the fish well.

Jack had already told his companion about his morning's adventure on the cliffs and his thrilling leap into the lake from the ledge above "Gull's Nest," so about all he had to talk about now was the new steamer which he had inspected through the kindness of Mr. Morgan, the pilot.

"How is it you were not at the wharf when the Sylph came in?" he asked Tom. "Half of the village was there to see the new boat."

"I was off on an errand for my father at the time and I couldn't get there."

"That was it, eh?"

"Yep. I was down at the wharf lookin' at her just before I came over here. She's a scrumptious boat, ain't she?"

"That's what she is. I've been all over her."

"No! Is that a fact?" asked Tom, enviously.

"Yes. Mr. Morgan, the pilot, saw me on the wharf and invited me aboard. If you'd been with me you could have gone over her, too."

"Gee! I missed it, didn't I?"

"You'll have lots of chances to inspect her yet. I'll take you aboard some afternoon when she makes her landing."

"Will you? That's prime. She's a better boat than the Holderness."

"I should say she is! I'd like to be pilot of such a boat—that is, if I wasn't doing so well as I am now."

"I guess you'd make a good one," said Tom. "You know the lake all around here like a book. You could take the steamer through either the outer or inner passage in the reef without any difficulty, couldn't you?"

"I wouldn't be afraid to do it at any time. The Sylph came in by the outer passage near the lightship this afternoon, so I suppose that will be her regular route. I'll guarantee to take her through there in any kind of weather she'll stand up to."

"There goes the light," said Tom, suddenly.

They both paused and gazed toward the lightship.

Slowly the lantern, a modest yet all-important luminary of the night, rose from the deck of the anchored vessel on the reef.

At last it reached its destination at the head of the thick

part of the single mast amidships, but about ten feet below the big red and black striped ball.

Simultaneous with the ascent of the Gull light there flashed on the distant horizon the gleam from the Manac's tubular lighthouse, on the Michigan side of the lake, miles to the south.

Ere long the lights of the different hotels, boarding-houses and cottages throughout Holderness illuminated the darkness of evening, while far up on Storm Stone Rock blazed forth the lights of the new hotel.

"This neighborhood looks fine on a summer night, doesn't it?" remarked Jack.

"Bet your life it does," replied Tom, enthusiastically.

"I can remember when there wasn't any hotels hereabouts, and consequently no lights at night to speak about—not even that there Gull lamp."

"So can I. It isn't so very long ago, either. A few years ago Holderness wasn't much more than a fishing village, for scarcely any one but the fishermen and their families lived here; now it is one of the most popular summer resorts on the lake. Funny how things turn out, isn't it?"

"That's so. This year it's goin' to be more popular than ever. And next year more than this. You won't be able to supply the trade next year with this boat. You'll have to get another and put me in charge of her."

"I was thinking about that," replied Jack. "I might as well control the trade when I've got the chance. The stewards of the hotels last year were so satisfied with the goods and the promptness with which I delivered them that no other fisherman was able to get my trade, and this year the stewards of the new houses sent for me right off and made a contract with me right off the reel."

"And you've got about all the boarding-houses, too, and most of the private cottages. There don't seem to be anybody left for the other fellows," grinned Tom.

"After the season is over we'll take the fish into Milwaukee, same as we did last fall, as long as there are any to catch," said Jack.

"You ought to make a good bit of money this year."

"I hope to, and every year, if I live, I mean to try and do better."

"You'd do fine with two boats," said Tom, who was growing ambitious to have charge of a fishing craft himself, as soon as he fancied himself competent to run her and produce the goods.

"I am sure I would," replied Jack. "Well, let's get ashore. We want to catch as much sleep as we can between this and four o'clock, for we start at sunrise."

So the boys rowed to the wharf, and thirty minutes later both were in the land of dreams.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

A little after four in the morning Jack arose, jumped out of bed and looked at the clock.

Then he began to hustle into his clothes.

He went down to the kitchen, started a fire in the stove and prepared a simple breakfast for himself and got away with it.

By that time it was quite light outside, although the sun was not yet up.

He went to the front gate to take a look up the road to see if Tom was in sight.

He was not, but a man he did not know was walking rapidly in the direction of the cottage.

Jack turned away to go down to the wharf, when he heard a shout.

He looked up the road again, and saw the man who was approaching wave his hand at him.

"I wonder what he wants with me?" thought the boy, waiting for him to come up.

"You're Jack Haviland, aren't you?" asked the man, coming to a pause on the other side of the fence.

"Yes, that's my name."

"Well, John Morgan, the pilot of the Sylph, has been taken suddenly ill and it will be out of the question for him to take the boat out this morning. He sent word to the company's agent to that effect, and recommended you as being thoroughly competent to take the steamer out through the reef. As he said you expected to sail on a fishing trip early this morning, the agent sent me around to ask you to step up to his house right away."

"Where does the agent live?" asked Jack.

The man told him.

"I don't see how I can afford to act as a temporary pilot to the Sylph, supposing that the agent offers me the job, as I can't neglect my own business. I have contracts to supply fish that must be filled. If I can get there I must be at the fishing grounds by noon, a considerable distance to the north."

"Can't you get some one to take your place for the trip?"

"I suppose I could do that, of course, but I like to attend to my own business, then I know it is done properly."

"Do you know any one who is competent to take the Sylph through the reef?"

"No, I do not."

"The boat is advertised to leave for Milwaukee at ten o'clock, and she's got to go, even if she has to steam to the north and east to get around the shoals. I am sure that the agent will make it worth your while to go to Milwaukee and back."

"But my usefulness would cease after the boat had passed through the reef until she has to repass it on her return to this place. I am not a lake pilot."

"The captain will take charge of the boat after you have carried her through the eastern passage. It is simply a question of getting her through the reef."

"I'd like to oblige you if I could do so without hindering my regular work. Here comes my assistant now, all ready to start. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll run up and see the agent, anyhow."

As soon as Tom Oliver came up, Jack told him to go aboard the Lake Bird and get all ready for sailing.

"I'll be back inside of half an hour," he concluded.

Then he started for the steamboat agent's house in company with the man who had been sent after him.

The agent was waiting for him.

"You are Jack Haviland, I believe?" he said in a businesslike way.

"Yes, that's my name," replied the young fisherman.

"You have been recommended to me as a person fully competent to take a steamer through the eastern channel of the Gulf Shoals. Are you prepared to undertake the job?"

"I can take any vessel of the Sylph's draught safely through either passage in the reef, but I am not looking for the job, as my time is fully occupied with my fishing business. I am now on the point of sailing for the fishing grounds after to-morrow's supply, which must be delivered at the hotels and other places according to contract."

"But you can get some other fisherman to take your place for one trip, can't you?"

"I can, of course, but would prefer not to."

"But it is necessary that we have a pilot to take the Sylph through the reef this morning. Mr. Morgan says you are the only one in Holderness that he would trust with the job. I am prepared to make it worth your while to help us out of our dilemma."

The agent then named the sum he was willing to pay.

"You will have nothing to do after carrying the steamboat through the eastern passage until the boat returns to the shoals to-morrow afternoon, when you will be expected to carry her to the Holderness wharf. You will be under no expense at Milwaukee, for you will eat and sleep on board the Sylph. I hope you will not turn the proposition down, for if we should be unable to find any one else capable of the work the captain would be obliged to take the boat many miles around to the north and eastward in order to clear the reefs which form a regular cul de sac around Holderness."

Jack considered the matter for several minutes.

He saw that it was a question of obliging the new steamboat company.

If he could do this without hurting his regular business he was willing to undertake the job.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Howard," he said at last.

"I'll see if I can get a certain fisherman to take my place on my fishing boat. He is about the only man in the village I can afford to trust, as I have cut out all the others from the bulk of the trade here, and they feel kind of sore over it, though I don't believe they would actually try to injure me in any way. If I can secure the man I have in mind I'll engage to go to Milwaukee and back on the Sylph."

"When can you let me know?" asked the agent.

"Within half an hour."

"That will be satisfactory. I shall then expect you back within that time."

"I should prefer that you send your messenger with me to bring back my answer, for if I get the man in question

"I'll have to take him to my boat and give him certain necessary instructions, which will take time."

"Very well. If your reply is favorable you will report to Captain Winthrop aboard the Sylph not later than fifteen minutes of ten o'clock."

"All right," replied Jack, and that ended the interview.

Haviland at once proceeded to the cottage of the fisherman with whom he was on especially friendly terms and laid the case before him.

The man agreed to take the Lake Bird to the fishing grounds and do his part toward getting the necessary supply of fish needed to fill Jack's engagements.

That settled the matter in favor of the steamboat company, and the boy dispatched the agent's messenger back with word that he would report on the Sylph at the designated time.

Tom Oliver, who had been growing impatient over the long delay in starting for the fishing grounds, was surprised when Jack appeared with old Ben Trawler and told him that Ben was going out in his place that morning, because he (Jack) had engaged to pilot the Sylph through the shoals in the place of Mr. Morgan, who had been taken unexpectedly ill.

"So you're goin' to Milwaukee on the boat?" said Tom.

"Yes, that's about the size of it. I'll be back to-morrow afternoon at five-thirty. You will have to look after the delivery of the fish to-morrow morning, Tom, and see that all my customers are properly served."

"You can depend on me, Jack," replied Tom.

"Yes, I have no fear of that, Tom."

So the Lake Bird sailed away to the north that morning without its young master, and Jack surprised his family by turning up for a second breakfast, when he explained the situation to his mother.

Promptly at a quarter to ten Haviland reported to Captain Winthrop, who was expecting him, aboard the Sylph.

There were not many passengers for Milwaukee that morning, but there was a large consignment of oil and gasoline aboard, which was stowed forward of the engine-room on the lower deck and immediately under the pilot-house.

The only woman passenger was Mrs. Senator Blake, who, with her little daughter Bessie, had been summoned home by a telegram announcing the sudden death of a near relative of the family.

At ten o'clock the hawsers were cast off, the Sylph swung away from the wharf, and, under Jack's guidance, headed for the eastern channel of the shoals.

The captain stood in the pilot-house while Haviland carried the steamboat through the perilous but short stretch of navigation, and then relieved him at the wheel.

After that the boy had nothing to do, but he remained in the pilot-house and conversed with the captain to pass away the time.

It was a fine, sunny morning, and the lake was barely ruffled by a light breeze.

The Sylph glided along like a swan at a twelve-mile-an-hour gait.

Her machinery worked so smoothly as to impart a scarcely perceptible jar to the new boat.

Everything pointed to a fine and speedy trip down to Milwaukee, and Jack really enjoyed the long sail in prospect.

Under such favorable conditions one could scarcely have looked for trouble.

Yet it is the unexpected that frequently happens.

And it came like a thunder-clap out of a clear sky.

As the Sylph was rounding a promontory fifteen miles below Holderness, and Haviland was in the midst of a story he was telling the captain about his fishing experiences, a sudden explosion shook the boat at a point underneath the pilot-house.

CHAPTER IX.

A THRILLING CATASTROPHE.

"Good Lord! what can that be?" gasped the captain, leaving the wheel and springing out of the pilot-house, followed by Jack Haviland.

The sound was evidently not caused by any derangement of the boat's machinery, for the thud of her engines went on as before.

Two deck hands, who had been lounging forward near the flagstaff, were seen running toward the inner section of the freight deck, and they looked greatly excited.

"What's the trouble below?" roared the captain.

"An explosion among the oil, sir," replied one of the men.

As he spoke a second report followed, with a third close on its heels.

"My heavens!" ejaculated the captain, who thoroughly understood the peril that menaced the boat. "Haviland, take charge of the wheel and signal the engineer to stop."

As Jack started to carry out this order the captain ran to the steps leading to the cabin deck and disappeared.

The boy saw a cloud of smoke whirling away from the stern of the steamboat as he entered the pilot-house and pulled the wire connecting with the engine-room.

Instantly the jarring sound of the machinery stopped and the paddle-wheels came to a rest, while the boat merely glided on under the momentum she had acquired.

Jack left the wheel and leaned on the rail overlooking the forward deck, so as to be ready to catch any order the captain might wish to communicate to him.

There was clearly great excitement on the boat, which was increased to a panic when two more explosions went off and big puffs of stifling smoke came rolling out from the place where the oil was stored.

"The explosions must have come from the gasoline," thought Jack, his nerves tingling from the excitement and uncertainty of the moment.

The smoke now was pouring out in a steady stream from the after part of the main deck, and the prospect began to look desperate to Haviland.

At that moment his eyes caught sight of the Holderness coming along in the wake.

Her captain evidently had discovered the trouble the Sylph was in, and was steering directly for her.

It was at that juncture that a man suddenly ran out on the forward deck with a life-preserver in his hands.

As he hastily buckled it around his body under his arm-pits he turned his white face up toward the pilot-house.

Jack recognized him at once.

It was Amos Flint, Mr. Isaac Naylor's confidential clerk.

What until that moment the boy had believed to be a natural accident now took on a very grave aspect.

The awful suspicion forced itself on Jack's mind that, in spite of his solemn promise not to molest the Sylph, Mr. Naylor had actually sent his clerk aboard the steamboat that morning to carry out the very scheme he had planned the previous morning on the beach.

Jack had flattered himself that he had blocked the rascal's game, but it now looked as if the magnate of Holderness had broken faith with him.

Amos Flint was evidently startled when he saw the face of the young fisherman staring down at him.

That Jack was aboard the Sylph was probably the last thing that would have occurred to his mind.

With his hand resting on the forward rail, he stared at the boy in a stupefied way.

Then another loud explosion occurred under the wheel-house, and a great cloud of smoke enveloped the fore part of the now almost stationary steamer.

It shut out the form of Amos Flint from Jack's eyes.

When it cleared away the clerk had disappeared, but Jack soon made him out in the water trying to swim, with the aid of the live-preserver, toward the Holderness, which was still some distance off.

The flames now began to make their appearance on the lower deck of the Sylph.

The smoke increased in volume, pouring out at both ends of the covered deck, and driving Jack away from the rail.

The engineer, as well as the two firemen in the hold below, left their posts to help fight the encroaching fire.

But the captain soon saw that it was a hopeless task—that the new steamboat was doomed.

He ordered his deck hands to go on the upper deck and cut away the boats secured there.

They had hardly thrown down the two lines of hose and started to carry out his orders before a number of the oil casks burst open, and the blazing oil began to flood the deck fore and aft, making a perfect sea of fire in the center of the steamer.

The flames rapidly ate their way up into the cabin above and burned through into the engine-room in the middle of the lower deck.

The heat was now so fierce that nearly all the male pas-

sengers seized life-preservers and, after hastily adjusting them, sprang overboard into the lake.

Practically the only passengers remaining on the boat were Mrs. Senator Blake and her little daughter Bessie.

Half-dazed with fright, they huddled near the after rail, gazing with distended eyes at the approaching fire.

The captain, in his desperate fight to save the steamboat, seemed to have entirely forgotten about these two helpless persons.

Not a male passenger had thought of them in his eager rush to get away from the blazing craft.

They each might have been provided with a life-preserver before the flames cut off further approach to those useful articles.

But every one of the other passengers had thought only of himself in the panic of the moment, and this terrified woman and her child were left to shift for themselves as best they could.

The fire continued to spread with inconceivable rapidity, fed as it was with hundreds of gallons of blazing oil, which carried the flames to all parts of the lower deck.

The captain had run above to give a hand to his men with the boats, failing to realize that they would be of little use at this stage of the catastrophe.

Jack in the meantime stuck to his post until he saw that it was useless for him to remain there any longer, and so he dashed down to the lower deck through the clouds of blinding smoke, passing on the way the men who were rushing up to get at the boats.

When he reached the lower part of the boat he was startled by the furnace-like aspect of the covered portion of the steamboat.

The fire was everywhere, having even reached the paddle-wheels.

"Great Scott! This is terrible!" he gasped. "Where are the passengers?"

Looking around him, he could make out the heads of many in the water around and behind the boat.

"They've all taken to the lake," he breathed, "and that's what I'll have to do in a minute or two, for no one can exist on this deck much longer."

A thrill of thankfulness passed through him when he saw that the Holderness was now coming up fast to the rescue of the victims of the disaster.

Still, it would be many minutes before she could draw near enough to begin to pick up the people scattered around in the water.

Suddenly, as Jack stood there on the after part of the open deck, a rift in the clouds of smoke showed him the huddled forms of Mrs. Senator Blake and her child.

"My heavens!" he cried. "A woman and a little girl still on this boat. I must save them. But how? The life-preservers!"

He knew exactly where they were kept, but a single glance in that direction showed him that they were utterly beyond his reach.

He gazed wildly around for something that would serve

to bear the helpless pair up in the water, but not a thing could he see that was available in the emergency.

Just then a stream of burning oil rolled toward the woman and the girl.

They saw it clearly enough, but, instead of trying to avoid it, their terror was so great that they never moved an inch—only stared at it as though fascinated by the terrible sight.

In another moment they would have been surrounded and set afire, but Jack dashed forward to their rescue.

He seized them both, each by an arm, and tore them away from the peril that menaced them.

Rushing them over to the opposite side of the deck, they fell inert against the rail.

Singular to relate, through all this terrible crisis the little girl never uttered a cry or even a word of any kind.

She simply clung to her mother's skirts, as if she expected her parent would manage to save her.

For a moment Jack studied the situation, and then made up his mind that the three of them must go overboard together, and that he must do the best he could to hold them up until assistance came from the Holderness.

"Brace up, ma'am," he said to the Senator's wife. "We've got to leave the steamboat at once. The heat, smoke and oncoming flames make it impossible for us to remain here many moments longer."

"Where can we go?" asked the frenzied mother. "Not the water," she gasped. "We cannot swim. We shall be drowned."

"I hope not, ma'am," replied the young fisherman, reassuringly. "I am a first-rate swimmer. I think I may be able to hold you both up, if you don't struggle, until yonder steamer, which is coming to our rescue, reaches us. At any rate, it is our only chance. A few minutes more and the fire will be all around us. Come."

Seizing Bessie Blake in his arms, Jack sprang upon the rail.

Then, steadying himself against one of the posts that supported the upper deck, he assisted the Senator's wife up beside him.

The lady shuddered as she looked down into the deep water of Lake Michigan.

"Are you ready, ma'am?" asked Jack, nerving himself for the life-and-death struggle that was before him.

"Yes, yes!" she gasped, covering her eyes with her hand to shut out the horror of the scene.

"Then jump!" he exclaimed.

Grasping the mother by the elbow and the child around the waist, Jack Haviland leaped down into the swirling waters.

Fortunately for the success of the brave boy's efforts, a man swam up and took Mrs. Blake off his hands.

They had not left the boat a moment too soon.

The flames were already encroaching on the very spot they had just quitted.

The fire bursting through the upper deck compelled the

captain and his men to shove the two boats they had detached into the lake any old way.

One of them immediately filled and sank.

The other floated, and Captain Winthrop and the deck hands jumped overboard and climbed into her.

Getting out the oars, they rowed about picking up many of the passengers, but they were not on the same side of the steamer where Jack and the stranger were supporting Mrs. Blake and her daughter, and these four had to wait until the Holderness came along and picked them up.

CHAPTER X.

WHEREIN MR. FLINT IS BADLY RATTLED.

Jack easily held Bessie Blake's head well above the water, and the child never made a struggle after the first cry when the three struck the surface of the lake and went under for the only time.

The boy kept near the man who was supporting the Senator's wife, ready to lend assistance if he showed any signs of giving out.

He was a fairly good swimmer, however, and the young fisherman was not called upon to render any aid.

The Holderness was now upon the scene of the disaster.

Her boats were quickly lowered, and the deck hands in them were presently helping the few victims of the catastrophe out of the water.

Jack Haviland signaled the nearest boat, which was rowed up, and Mrs. Bates and her little daughter were picked up, Haviland and the man clambering aboard without any assistance.

They were soon transferred to the Holderness, where every attention was offered the lady and her child, the captain tendering them the use of his stateroom.

Jack hastened down into the boiler-room of the steamer, pulled off his soaked garments and hung them up where the heat was bound to dry them in short order.

The firemen, of course, wanted to know all about the calamity which had happened to the Sylph.

"How did she catch afire?" asked one of the coal handlers.

"It began with the explosion of one of the casks of gasoline in the forward deck under the pilot-house," replied Jack. "This was quickly followed by other explosions as the flames attacked the barrels and the burning vapor spread about."

"Is that a fact?" replied the man. "Well, we've carried that stuff on this boat for two years, and we never had an accident. I suppose you don't know what caused the explosion?"

"I have a suspicion," answered Jack.

"A suspicion, eh? What do you mean by that?"

"I'm not saying anything at present. Perhaps I may be a witness when the investigation is held."

"Do you mean to insinuate that there was any crooked business about it?"

"I haven't said so."

"Your way of talking would give one that idea. Where were you at the time the fire broke out—near the oil barrels?"

"No. I was in the pilot-house talking to Captain Winthrop."

"Then how could you have any idea at all as to what caused the fire?"

"I don't care to explain my reasons at present."

"Huh!" replied the man, in a huff. "I don't believe you have any. You're like all boys—want to make a mountain out of a molehill."

Jack laughed.

"Well, if it's all the same to you, we'll let it go at that."

"I suppose the new boat is a total loss by this time," said the coal heaver, with a grin.

"I'm afraid she is."

"That squelches the opposition for this season, at any rate," replied the man, with evident satisfaction. "No danger now of you and me losing our jobs, eh?" he added, turning to his companion.

That's right," chuckled the other.

"Any of the passengers injured or drowned?" asked the first spokesman.

"Not that I have heard of," replied Jack. "They all went overboard, but, as they had life-preservers on, I guess they'll all be accounted for. There was one woman aboard, with a little girl. They had rather a narrow shave, but they are safe now."

"It's lucky we were close at hand to help you people out of your scrape," said the coal heaver.

Haviland nodded and felt of his steaming garments.

A batch of the Sylph's passengers were led below by the mate of the Holderness, who told them to disrobe and get their clothes dry.

The boiler-room was now pretty well crowded, and everybody had something to say about his idea of the disaster.

Most of the people blamed the new steamboat company for carrying the oil on their steamer, forgetting that it had been carried by the Holderness for two years without an accident.

All were agreed that the loss of the Sylph would put the opposition line out of business.

Jack listened to the remarks circulating about him, but said nothing on the subject whatever.

In a short time the jarring of the boat showed that the steamer had got under way again for Milwaukee.

At the first stop the news of the loss of the Sylph was telegraphed both to Holderness and Milwaukee, and as a matter of course created a great deal of excitement at both places.

When Jack's clothes were fit to put on, he dressed himself and got out of the hot boiler-room.

Soon afterward the mate of the boat came up to him

and asked if he was not the young man who had saved the lady and little girl from being burned up on the Sylph.

"Yes," admitted Jack.

"Well, you're wanted in the cap'n's cabin. Follow me."

He accompanied the mate to the captain's quarters.

On a short sofa sat Mrs. Blake and her daughter, clothed in garments furnished by the stewardess of the boat.

The captain was talking to the lady.

"Walk right in, young man," he said, when Jack and his conductor appeared in the doorway. "This is the boy you wished to see, isn't it?" he added, turning to the Senator's wife.

"Yes," she replied, for she instantly recognized Jack.

"I think I have seen you before, my lad," said the captain. "If I am not mistaken, you live in Holderness?"

"Yes, sir."

"I don't recall your name, however."

"Jack Haviland."

"Well, Haviland, this is Mrs. Blake, wife of Senator Blake, of Milwaukee. She wishes to thank you for saving her life and that of her little daughter. She says but for you they both must have perished on board the Sylph."

The lady sprang from her seat and grasped Jack by both hands.

"I am sure I never can sufficiently thank you for what you did for both of us, Mr. Haviland," she said, with considerable emotion. "We are very grateful to you, and my husband, when he learns the particulars, will insist on acknowledging the obligation in some substantial way."

"I am very happy to have been of service to you, Mrs. Blake," said Jack, politely. "But I don't think I did any more than my duty under the circumstances. You were not able to help yourself, and only a coward would have left you to face the awful peril surrounding you. I can only say that I did the best I knew how to save you and your little girl."

"You couldn't have done more, Mr. Haviland, and Bessie and myself will be grateful to you as long as we live."

She made Jack sit beside her, and asked him many questions about himself.

The captain had dinner served to Mrs. Blake and Bessie in the private cabin, and Jack was invited to dine with them.

After the meal the young fisherman excused himself and started around the boat to find Amos Flint, whom he thoroughly believed to be responsible for the destruction of the Sylph.

It was some time before he located that individual, but he finally found him seated on a camp chair in a retired nook.

"Well, Mr. Flint," said Jack, planting himself before Mr. Naylor's man of business, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

"What's that?" replied the clerk, in quavering tones. "What do you mean?"

"I see that you carried out Mr. Naylor's orders, after all."

"I don't know what you are talking about," protested Mr. Flint.

"You don't?"

"I don't. I don't know you at all, and can't see why you are addressing me."

"You don't know me, Mr. Flint? What a short memory you must have?" replied Jack, sarcastically. "You don't recollect seeing me on the beach at the foot of the cliffs yesterday morning when you and your employer, Mr. Naylor, were discussing a plan to put the Sylph out of business? The very scheme suggested by Mr. Naylor for the destruction of the new steamboat seems to have been put into execution, after all. You didn't expect to find me on the Sylph, did you? Thought you could do the little job without your connection with the matter being suspected? Well, you see now that you only put your foot in it."

"I don't know what you mean," replied Mr. Flint, shivering as if suffering from an attack of the ague. "I tell you I don't know you at all."

"All right, Mr. Flint. That's all I've got to say to you. I just thought I'd satisfy myself whether or not you were guilty. The loss of the Sylph will be investigated, and when it is I think you will be called upon to explain your actions previous to the moment of the first explosion. Maybe you think you weren't watched, Mr. Flint? Perhaps when I give my evidence before the committee you will learn a thing or two that you won't like to hear. That's all for the present, Mr. Flint."

Amos Flint was guilty, and he showed the fact in his face and actions.

It was not that his conscience smote him for the deed he had committed, but his fears were alive for his own personal safety.

Jack's veiled words terrified him.

He had easily recognized the boy as the one he had seen on the beach, and who had overheard the villainous project forced upon him by Mr. Naylor.

He was fully persuaded that Haviland's presence on board of the Sylph was due to his knowledge of the contemplated plot to destroy the steamboat in mid-lake.

He believed that the boy had been watching his movements, and when he saw him take passage on the ill-fated steamer had followed to keep an eye on him.

It did not seem to occur to him that had Jack really done this he would have had him taken in hand before he could have done any damage.

From the way the boy had just addressed him he believed that Haviland had seen him set fire to the barrel of gasoline which had caused all the damage.

He pictured to himself a policeman waiting at the wharf in Milwaukee with a warrant for his arrest.

How could he escape the fate that appeared to be in store for him?

Leave the boat at the next landing?

Would he be permitted to do that?

And if he did, where could he go, without any money to speak of, where he might be secure from capture?

The sweat oozed out on the rascal's brow, and he looked the very picture of terrified despair as he watched Jack walk away.

"Oh, Lord!" he exclaimed to himself, with chattering teeth. "What will become of me? And what will become of Mrs. Flint and the little Flints?"

The boat was just then putting in at her second landing.

Mr. Flint recognized the fact when he heard the sound of the gong in the engine-room and felt the stoppage of the paddle-wheels.

He jumped to his feet and ran to the opposite side of the boat.

Was there any way by which he could get ashore except by the gangway plank, which he was afraid to risk?

As the boat gradually closed in to the dock he saw that he might possibly step on the wharf from a point near her bows.

He watched the deck hands forward throw the heavy hawser to the man on the dock, who caught the looped end and placed it over the head of a thick spile head.

Now he heard the rumble of the gangway plank aft, and saw the first of the passengers who intended to go no further down the lake walk ashore.

There was no freight to be taken on or put off at this landing, so the forward gangway plank was not put into use.

Mr. Flint looked all around for Jack Haviland, but could not see him.

"Now is my chance," he said to himself, as he saw the deck hands seize the ropes attached to the gangway plank to haul it on board again.

He sprang quickly on to the steamer's forward rail and jumped to the wharf.

On the edge of the pier there was a storehouse, the end of which reached nearly to the point where the clerk stepped on the wharf, and he took advantage of the fact to dart behind it just as the man threw the big hawser into the water and the steamer's paddle wheels began to revolve.

"I'm safe for a while, at any rate," he whispered to himself, as he hid behind a spile head and watched the Holder-ness steam out into the lake.

Perhaps he was, but we shall see.

CHAPTER XI.

JACK SHADOWS MR. NAYLOR'S MAN OF BUSINESS.

When Jack left the presence of Mr. Flint he saw that the boat was approaching a small lake town, where it was evident she intended to make a landing.

At first he was interested only in seeing the boat made fast to the wharf.

But suddenly the idea occurred to him that perhaps Mr. Flint might take advantage of the occasion to make his escape from the boat.

"If he does that," thought the boy, "it will be additional evidence against him. I guess I'll go back and see if he's going to make a move."

Jack hurried back to the spot where he had left the clerk seated on the camp chair.

The chair was there, but Mr. Flint had disappeared.

"I'll watch the gangway plank," he said to himself, hurrying toward the rear of the boat, where he knew the passengers disembarked.

Suddenly he paused.

"There are two gangway planks, come to think of it. It would be just like that rascal to sneak off by the forward one, where they put the freight off. I'd like to watch both."

He knew he could do that by taking his position on the top of the paddle-wheel box.

It is true he had no right to go up there, but he guessed no one would interfere with him.

So he started for the roof of the paddle-box.

"If that fellow does go ashore I've a great mind to follow him," thought Jack, as he hurried to the upper deck. "I believe I could frighten him into making a confession. If such a thing is to be accomplished it must be done before Mr. Naylor has an opportunity to stiffen his backbone."

When Jack stepped out on the top of the paddle-box the deck hands were just shoving the after gangway plank on to the dock.

Then several passengers started ashore.

Jack looked forward, but saw no move made to put the other plank out.

"I guess there's nothing doing in the freight line at this point," he thought. "If Mr. Flint intends to go ashore he'll have to go by the after plank."

There was no sign of Mr. Flint in that direction when the order was given to take in the gangway plank and cast the hawsers loose.

"He's not going to leave the boat, after all," said the boy.

Just then, as his eyes wandered forward again, he saw a figure spring on to the steamboat's rail and leap on the dock.

"By George! If that isn't Mr. Flint, I'm as blind as a bat. The rascal! He waited until the last moment, so he couldn't be followed. Well, he's got the bulge on me, after all. No, he hasn't. I'll risk it."

The reason for the boy's final exclamation was that just as the shore ends of both hawsers fell with a simultaneous splash into the water, and the paddle-wheels started to revolve, he noticed that the top of the paddle-box was nearly on a level with the flat roof of the storehouse, which was built on the edge of the dock.

The space between where he stood and the roof of the building was not more than a yard at that moment, and it was possible for an agile lad like Jack Haviland to leap in safety across the yawning gulf.

But there was no time to consider the matter, for a full turn of the paddle-wheels would carry the steamboat beyond

the line of the building, and if the thing was to be done it had to be accomplished on the spur of the moment.

So Jack, without calculating the risk he ran, sprang at once for the roof of the storehouse, and fortunately landed there firmly and safely.

As the boat pulled out into the lake the boy ran to the side of the storehouse to try and catch a glimpse of Mr. Flint.

With a chuckle of delight he saw the rascal watching the departure of the boat from the shelter of the spile head.

"I'll bet he's congratulating himself on his cuteness in giving me the slip," thought Jack. "I'll soon undeceive him. I'll give him the surprise of his life. But first I've got to get down from this roof."

Jack looked around him and saw a small scuttle.

He raised it to obtain a view of the interior of the building.

There was a short flight of steps leading down to a kind of loft, which the boy saw was filled with rope and tackle, blocks, fenders, and articles of a similar nature.

He ran down the steps and closed the scuttle behind him.

Then he was rather puzzled to find the way to get down to the ground floor.

This annoyed him, for unless he was able to make haste there was a strong probability that he would lose track of Mr. Flint altogether, which, under the circumstances, he would have regarded as a misfortune.

He had no matches about his clothes to throw a light on the difficulty, and he was on the point of returning to the roof, to try some other way of getting down, when he stumbled upon a trap-door.

Raising it, he found a wide flight of stairs before him, and, taking these, was soon standing on the ground floor of the building, which was subdivided into small box-like rooms, used for various purposes connected with the lake traffic.

The big sliding door at the front of the building was wide open, and there was one or more persons in each of the small offices.

People were coming in and going out all the time, and men in check jumpers were wheeling sundry small cases of merchandise from the exterior to the interior.

No one, however, paid any attention to Jack Haviland, who walked quickly to the doorway and scanned the wharf for the familiar figure of Amos Flint.

The clerk had left his place of refuge behind the spile head and was not in sight, much to Jack's chagrin.

"He must have walked up the wharf," thought the boy, and, under this impression, Haviland started for the head of the dock.

The wharf abutted upon a long street, with buildings on one side only.

Looking first up and then down this thoroughfare, Jack, to his great satisfaction, discovered Mr. Flint about half a block away, walking slowly along, with his head bent down as if he was thinking deeply.

Presently he braced up, and Jack saw him stop a man

who had just come out of a store, and the boy presumed he was asking for some information.

At any rate, the man led him to the next corner and waved his hand in a certain direction to emphasize his words.

Mr. Flint immediately started off up the street, and Jack hurried after him.

In this way several blocks were traversed by Mr. Naylor's clerk and the young fisherman.

Jack had no difficulty in shadowing the object of his pursuit, as the town was a small one and there were not a great many people abroad.

At no time did Mr. Flint look back, or show any evidence that he suspected he was being followed.

"I wonder where he is aiming for?" Jack asked himself.

This question was answered in a few minutes when the boy saw a railroad station right ahead.

Evidently Mr. Flint intended to take the first train out of the town.

He made straight for the ticket seller's window, which was open, showing that a train was expected to arrive in a short time.

Jack hastened his steps and came up behind the rascal in time to hear him ask for a ticket to Milwaukee.

He paid for it and went out on the platform.

Jack decided to go on to Milwaukee also, as he had not yet settled in his own mind how he was going to deal with Mr. Flint.

He kept out of the clerk's sight until the train pulled in, then he boarded the same car that Mr. Flint took, taking a seat some distance behind him.

The railroad ran along the shore of the lake for the entire distance to Milwaukee, so that the passengers had an almost continuous view of the water from the car windows.

Therefore Jack was not surprised inside of an hour to see the Holderness ploughing her way southward toward her port of destination.

He calculated that the train would beat her into Milwaukee by a couple of hours at least, and he hoped that before that time he would have settled matters with Mr. Naylor's man of business.

He was not quite so confident of a successful issue to the business in hand as he had been at the start, for he judged that Mr. Flint was a pretty foxy person to drive into a corner.

Still, being satisfied of the man's guilt, he believed the advantage was on his side.

At any rate, he was determined to bring the clerk to justice if it was possible for him to do so.

It was about quarter to five when the train rolled into the Union Station at Milwaukee.

Mr. Flint got out on the platform and Jack followed close behind him.

The clerk hastened across the street to a small hotel and went directly to the reading-room, where he took possession of a chair in front of one of the writing-tables and, drawing some paper and an envelope toward him, began to write.

"I'll bet he's writing to Mr. Naylor," thought Jack, observing him from the doorway. "Now, I'd give considerable to learn what he's writing about. It must be in relation to his dastardly work on the lake. If I can gain possession of that letter after he has finished it I may secure sufficient evidence on which to cause his arrest. How can I manage it?"

Jack finally decided on the course he would pursue, but he made no move until Mr. Flint, having completed his letter, drew the envelope toward him to address it.

Then the boy walked softly up behind the clerk and looked over his shoulder.

Mr. Flint had written "Mr. Isaac Naylor, Holderness," and was putting down the abbreviation of Wisconsin.

Jack was sure now that he wanted that letter, so, laying his hand on the clerk's shoulder, he said:

"How do you do, Mr. Flint?"

The rascal gave a violent start and looked around.

A sudden spasm of terror convulsed his features, and the pen fell from his nerveless hand.

Jack took advantage of his fright to reach over, secure the folded letter and put it in his pocket.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH MR. FLINT IS CORNERED.

"Well, Mr. Flint," said the boy, pleasantly, drawing a chair beside the clerk's, "I see we meet again."

"You here?" gasped the paralyzed rascal. "Why—why—how—"

"How did I manage to get here ahead of the steamer? Is that what you want to know? How did you manage that yourself?"

"Wha—what do you want?" faltered the clerk.

"I want to talk to you, Mr. Flint."

"I don't want to talk to you. I don't know you."

"Oh, you know me, all right. Why did you sneak ashore from the Holderness at Lakeview and then come on here by train? Why did you do that, Mr. Flint?"

The rascal made no answer, only stared at the young fisherman in great consternation.

"Shall I tell you why you did so, Mr. Flint?" said Jack, smiling as pleasantly as before. "You wanted to throw me off your track. You were afraid that when the Holderness arrived at this place I would have you arrested."

"Arrested!" replied the man, with ashen lips.

"Exactly. You caused the destruction of the Sylph in mid-lake this forenoon and—"

"It's a lie!" cried Mr. Flint, hoarsely.

"Not so loud, Mr. Flint, unless you wish everybody in the room to learn what kind of a man you are."

The clerk moved uneasily in his chair and gulped down some words that rose to his lips.

"So you deny that you set fire to the Sylph, do you?" said Jack, looking his man straight in the eye.

"I do. I don't know what you are talking about."

"Very well, Mr. Flint. I am going to hand you over to the police and let them sift the matter out," replied the boy, resolutely. "When you leave this room you will do so in charge of an officer."

Jack made a feint to rise, and, as he expected, Mr. Flint grasped him by the arm to detain him.

"Are you going to charge me with setting fire to the Sylph?" he asked in hollow tones.

"I am," answered Jack, firmly.

The rascal shivered and seemed on the verge of a collapse.

"Do you want to ruin me?" he gasped. "Think of Mrs. Flint and the little Flints."

"It was your business to think of your family before you carried out the crime forced on you by Mr. Naylor."

"Yes, yes, it was his fault. He's to blame for everything. I didn't want to do the work, but he has me in his power, and if I refused to obey him——"

The unhappy man stopped, realizing that he was saying too much.

"I understand, Mr. Flint," said Jack. "You forged some kind of a document and he holds it over your head."

"I never said that," faltered the clerk.

"No; but I heard Mr. Naylor mention the matter to you yesterday morning on the beach. He said he could send you to State prison any time he chose."

Mr. Flint groaned.

"You were just writing to Mr. Naylor, I believe," went on Jack.

The trembling man turned quickly to the desk and grabbed—nothing.

The letter he had written was not there—only the addressed envelope stared him in the face.

"Why—why, here——" he gasped.

"Oh, you want to know where the letter is, eh? Well, it's safe."

"Safe!" gurgled the rascal.

"Yes, in my pocket."

"Give it to me," cried Mr. Flint, in an agitated tone.

"You have no right to take the letter. How dare you touch it?"

"I have appropriated it in the interests of justice. I believe it will furnish sufficient evidence to connect both you and Mr. Naylor with the destruction of the Sylph."

"No, no; there is nothing in it——"

"Well, if there is nothing in it of an incriminating nature, so much the better for Mr. Naylor, especially. I shall let the authorities pass upon its contents."

"Don't do that," pleaded the trembling clerk.

"Why not?" demanded Jack. "You say there's nothing of a damaging nature in the letter. You ought to know, for you wrote it. Perhaps you have no objection to me reading it, then?"

"You have no right——"

"Very good; then I shall turn it over to the police, as I regard it with a good deal of suspicion."

Mr. Flint was clearly driven into a corner."

"What are you going to do?" he asked with a shiver.

"I am going to cause your immediate arrest."

"Did you see——" then he stopped.

"See what?"

Mr. Flint's eyes rolled about in his head.

"Will you let me go if I tell you everything?" he almost groveled. "You can have Mr. Naylor arrested and punished."

"Then you admit that you set fire to the oil aboard of the Sylph?"

"Yes, yes," groaned the rascal; "I admit everything. You must have seen me, or you wouldn't be hounding me in this way."

Jack experienced a thrill of satisfaction at the man's words.

He had at last accomplished his purpose.

"Take a sheet of paper and put your admission in writing," said the boy.

"Will you promise to let me go if I do?" he asked.

"No," replied Jack, promptly. "I intend to have you arrested for the crime. I am not going to compound a felony by helping you to get away."

"Oh, Lord!" gurgled Mr. Flint. "What'll become of me, and Mrs. Flint and——"

"You ought to have considered all that before you went into the villainous affair. You committed a crime with your eyes open, and if you have to pay the piper you can blame nobody but yourself and Mr. Isaac Naylor."

Jack rose and walked to the door to beckon to a bellboy. Mr. Flint eyed him with despair in his face.

His little beady eyes traveled around the room looking for some avenue by which he might make his escape.

An open window near at hand caught his attention.

Jack's back was for the moment turned toward him.

He took advantage of that fact to spring to his feet, run to the window and scramble through, to the great surprise of the half-dozen guests in the room.

Haviland turned just in time to see his head vanish below the sill outside.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH MR. FLINT TURNS THE TABLES ON JACK HAVILAND.

"The slippery rascal!" ejaculated Jack, dashing for the window.

He stuck his head out of the opening and saw Mr. Flint running up the street.

To spring through the window and start after the fugitive was but the work of a moment.

The reader has already had some evidence to show that Jack Haviland was a fleet runner.

Under ordinary conditions Mr. Flint stood very little show of eluding the young fisherman.

What Mr. Flint lacked in speed he made up in craft.

Turning the first corner he came to, he made direct for the railroad yards.

A network of steel tracks was spread out less than half a block away.

He never looked back to see if Jack Haviland was at his heels or not.

His sole object was to hide himself somewhere among the maze of freight cars that stood along the tracks, and at the first chance board some train going south, as was his intention before he wrote that letter to Mr. Naylor.

He never would have succeeded in accomplishing this plan but for an interposition of fate in his favor.

As he dashed into the yards, Jack was close at his heels and would have had him by the collar in a moment or two more.

In fact, the boy was so certain of catching him that he chuckled at the ridiculous figure cut by the fleeing rascal, and felt almost like giving him more rope, so as to add to the excitement of the final capture.

Mr. Flint flew like a daddy-long-legs across the first track, and Jack was about to follow, when a man standing near reached out and caught him by the arm.

"Can't you see where you're running, you fool!" roared the yardman.

As Jack turned angrily upon him, a big freight engine, attached to a long line of box cars, went lumbering by, and so close to him that the boy felt the hot breath of the escaping steam in his face.

But for the yardman he probably would have been run down and crushed under the ponderous locomotive.

"Gee whiz!" he exclaimed. "What an escape!"

"Well, I should say it was, young man," answered the yardman. "It's lucky I was standing here. I saved you and the company a heap of trouble."

"I am much obliged to you," replied Jack, gratefully. "But it's too bad."

"Too bad! What, that I saved you? You didn't intend to commit suicide, did you?" he queried suspiciously.

"No, I did not mean that. I mean that it was too bad that rascal has escaped me."

"What rascal?"

"The man who dashed across the track just ahead of me. It's a great pity you didn't stop him. Now I'll lose him, for by the time this long train gets by he'll have had loads of time to get out of sight."

And so it proved.

The train seemed to Jack's impatient eyes a never-ending one.

Several minutes elapsed before the caboose swung by, and then the boy dashed across the tracks, with his eyes on the alert for some trace of Mr. Flint.

The rascally clerk, however, was not to be seen.

Whether he had gone up or down the yard, Jack had no means of knowing.

That he succeeded in getting off seemed to be quite evident.

"It's too bad," growled the young fisherman, feeling a bit out of humor because the freight train had played such a scurvy trick upon him. "I was so sure I had him dead to rights. I almost had my hands on him. I suppose he's laughing in his sleeve at me now. It's enough to make a chap as mad as a hornet."

But Jack did not intend to abandon his search for Mr. Flint without making a persistent effort to locate him again.

He inquired of yard men at different points, but none of them had seen anybody answering to the fugitive's description.

So, after half an hour's ineffectual hunt, he gave it up and asked his way to the police headquarters.

Previous to going there he took out the letter written by Mr. Flint to his guilty employer and read it.

"It was plainly addressed to 'Mr. Isaac Naylor,' Holderness, Wis.," and was just as plainly signed "Amos Flint."

In it the writer briefly explained that he had carried out his orders to the letter, and that the Sylph was now a charred wreck at the bottom of Lake Michigan, off Hallett's Point.

Mr. Flint said that he could not return to Holderness, as he had reason to believe that he would be arrested on suspicion, for the boy who had overheard their conversation on the beach had evidently followed him aboard the Sylph that morning and had, he believed, kept tab on his movements.

He concluded by asking Mr. Naylor to send him one hundred dollars addressed to Chicago, where he was going by the night express.

"It isn't likely that he'll go by the night express now," mused Jack. "He wouldn't be such a fool, with this letter in my possession. Well, the police will have to try and capture him now. I've done about all I can."

Jack now decided that he would not go to police headquarters and tell his story, for fear he might be detained until a matter of such serious import was investigated.

He had heard a good many stories about the peculiar methods of the police of large cities, and consequently he rather dreaded an interview with them.

"I'll try and hunt up the president of the Milwaukee Steamboat Company, tell him about the plot to destroy the Sylph, which was so successfully carried out by Mr. Flint, and turn over the letter to him. He'll know how to act in the affair much better than I. I dare say he's likely to be found at the wharf where the Holderness comes in, as he will want to see Captain Winthrop at once in order to learn all the particulars of the disaster."

So Jack inquired how he could reach the wharf of the Lake Michigan Navigation Company.

He was told to take a certain car which would carry him within a couple of blocks of his destination.

When he reached the dock he found a big crowd waiting for the Holderness, which was not yet in sight, though it was after six o'clock.

He went to the office on the pier and asked a clerk if he knew the president of the opposition line.

"You mean Mr. Douglas? He's in the back room. Step inside and you'll find him."

Jack walked into the rear room, where he found the gentleman in question talking to several reporters of the city dailies, who had come down to gather particulars of the loss of the Sylph as soon as her passengers and crew were brought in by the Holderness.

A fine-looking gentleman of stalwart proportions was also in the room.

He was pacing up and down in a way that showed he was ill at ease.

As Jack approached the group the stalwart man looked at him a moment and then said:

"Isn't the Holderness in sight yet?"

"No, sir," replied the boy respectfully.

"She is hardly due yet, Senator Blake," remarked one of the reporters. "She's a slow boat and was late in getting into Centerport, eighteen miles north of here. She lost time, as a matter of course, stopping to pick up the passengers and crew of the Sylph."

"Yes, yes, I know; but you must make allowances for my impatience. My wife and little girl were on the burned boat, and though the dispatches say no one was lost, still they must have suffered."

"Your wife and daughter are all right, Senator Blake," said Jack, impulsively.

"How can you tell that, young man?" asked the Senator, staring at him.

"Because I helped rescue them from the burning steamer, and afterward saw them in first-class shape in the cap'n's cabin on board the Holderness."

Jack spoke without realizing the consequences that such a speech would necessarily produce on the assembled company.

As the words dropped from his lips the eye of every man in the room, especially the eyes of the reporters, were fixed upon him.

Hardly had he finished before he was surrounded by the newspaper men.

"How in thunder did you get here ahead of the Holderness?" asked one.

"I went ashore at Lakeview and took a train down."

Senator Blake, however, brushed the reporters aside.

"Are you telling the exact truth, young man?" he asked with feverish impatience.

"Yes, sir."

"And you know that my wife and little girl are all right?"

"I am positive of it."

"Thank God!" breathed the big politician, fervently.

"Did you say you assisted in saving them, young man?"

"I did say so."

"Then I want your name and address at once. You shall be rewarded for it."

"No, sir; you can't reward me for doing my duty," replied Jack, stoutly.

"But, young man, I insist——"

"If you want my name you can get it from your wife. I hope you won't detain me now, as I have important business with Mr. Douglas."

"With me?" asked the president of the Milwaukee Steamboat Company.

"Yes, sir. I must have a private interview with you at once. It concerns the loss of the Sylph."

"Very well. You shall have it. There is a small office adjoining this room. We will go in there," he said, leading the way.

The group of reporters, clamorous for an account of the disaster from the lips of an eye-witness, as well as one who had participated in the work of rescue, was much disappointed as Mr. Douglass and the boy retired from the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEREIN JACK TELLS WHAT HE KNOWS ABOUT THE CAUSE OF THE LOSS OF THE SYLPH.

"Well, young man, what is it you have to say to me about the loss of the Sylph? By the way, what is your name?"

"My name is Jack Haviland. I was hired early this morning by the agent of your company at Holderness to pilot the Sylph through the Gull Shoals——"

"You were?" interrupted Mr. Douglas, incredulously. "You were hired by Mr. Howard to pilot the Sylph through the Gull Shoals?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Morgan, your regular pilot, was taken suddenly ill during the night, and, being unable to report for duty, he recommended me to the agent."

"Oh, I see," replied the president of the steamboat company. "Go on."

"I may as well tell you, sir, that I didn't want the job, for I have a fishing business of my own which requires all my attention. However, I did it to oblige Mr. Morgan, who is an old friend of our family, and also to help the company out of a difficulty. I may also say that Mr. Howard agreed to pay me a handsome sum for the work, only half of which I have been able to earn, owing to the loss of the steamer."

"Well, Haviland, it's about the loss of the steamer that I want to hear," said Mr. Douglas, impatiently.

"I will give you the particulars right away, sir."

"Thereupon Jack told him how, when the boat was off Hallett's Point, fifteen miles south of Holderness, the explosion of a barrel of naphtha started the blaze which eventually resulted in the loss of the Sylph.

After Jack had given the particulars of the rescue of the passengers and crew, merely stating in a matter-of-fact way how he had saved the wife and daughter of Senator Blake, he came to the most important part of the interview.

"The general opinion is that the loss of the steamboat was due to the accidental explosion of the first barrel of naphtha," said Jack.

"I presume it was so," replied Mr. Douglas; "but a searching investigation will have to be made to discover, if possible, why the naphtha exploded. The Holderness has carried oil and naphtha for two years without a single accident occurring. Yet on the first down trip of our new boat an accident happens which has destroyed the boat and placed the lives of all on board in jeopardy. Stringent orders were issued to the captain of the boat with reference to that oil, and he will now have to explain, if he can, how the disaster was brought about."

"I am sure that he will be unable to explain the matter. I am the only one who can do that."

"You!" exclaimed Mr. Douglas, regarding the boy intently.

"Yes, sir, and you will find my story rather hard to believe. Fortunately I believe I am able to furnish you with convincing proof to back up my statement."

"Proceed," said Mr. Douglas, with eager attention.

Jack then proceeded to tell the president of the Milwaukee Steamboat Company the substance of the conversation he overheard on the beach at Holderness on the previous morning between Isaac Naylor, head of the Lake Michigan Navigation Company, and Amos Flint, his man of business.

Mr. Douglas sprang to his feet in great excitement.

"This can't be possible, young man," he said, with flushed face. "What! Isaac Naylor, the wealthy owner of the Navigation Company, guilty of criminal conspiracy against our boat? I can't believe it. It is not reasonable."

"I hardly thought you'd believe me without some proof," replied Jack.

"Where is it? I must see it before I can believe there is any ground to suspect Mr. Naylor of guilty connivance in the loss of the Sylph."

"I will show it to you in a moment, sir; but first it will be necessary for me to tell you how this evidence came into my possession, and the facts leading up to it."

Jack then told Mr. Douglas how he had first seen Mr. Flint rush out from the part of the deck where the fire had started with a life-preserver in his hand.

"He was the first person on board to go overboard and try to save himself."

Then he recounted the brief interview he had had with Mr. Flint on board of the Holderness, and said that the clerk had shown every evidence of guilt and fear of detection.

"He sneaked ashore at Lakeview just as the boat was pulling out from the wharf," went on Jack, "and I followed him by leaping from the top of the paddle-box, where I was watching to see if he meant to leave the boat at that place, to the roof of a storehouse built on the edge of the pier."

Jack told how he followed the clerk to the railroad station and boarded the same train for Milwaukee; how he had shadowed Mr. Flint across the street from the Union Depot to a hotel and watched him write a letter which he believed was meant for Mr. Naylor; how he had obtained possession of that letter; and how, by driving Mr. Flint

into a corner, he had extracted a reluctant confession from him that he was indeed guilty of setting fire to the naphtha barrel.

"Where is this man Flint now? Of course you had him arrested?"

"I regret to say that he was a trifle too smart for me when it came to the pinch," replied Jack. "He managed to escape," and the young fisherman explained how the rascal eluded him through the unfortunate interposition of the long freight train which prevented him (Jack) from reaching the other side of that track.

"Well, the police must be notified at once and every effort made to capture him. But that letter? Where is it?"

"Here, sir," and Jack produced it.

Mr. Douglas read it with a corrugated brow, then refolded it and put it into his pocket.

"The letter certainly corroborates your story, young man, and shows Mr. Naylor up in a bad light. But its value largely depends on the capture of the man who wrote it. Mr. Flint must be made to acknowledge the facts on the witness-stand, otherwise it will be a hard matter to prove that he actually wrote that letter."

"But I saw him write it, sir."

"If he should swear that he did not write it his word would be as good as yours. Still, I dare say we would be able to get specimens of his handwriting for an expert to pass upon and compare with the letter. However, we must get hold of Mr. Flint at all hazards, for he is the most important witness in the case."

There was a telephone in the little room, and Mr. Douglas took the liberty of using it to communicate with the police department.

A full description of Mr. Flint was sent over the wire, together with such facts as were suggested by Haviland, and the authorities were asked to catch him at any cost.

Mr. Douglas told Jack that his presence would be required before the board of directors of the steamboat company next day.

"The company will pay your expenses while you remain in this city," he said. "I will telephone the Lake House to provide you with a room and meals."

This was done at once, and Jack was told how to reach the hotel.

"A messenger will call for you in the forenoon," said Mr. Douglass, "so do not leave the hotel before he arrives."

As Mr. Douglas and Haviland quitted the small office announcement was made that the Holderness was coming in to the wharf, and a rush was made by every one for the spot where the gangway plank was landed.

CHAPTER XV.

JACK MAKES AN INFLUENTIAL FRIEND.

Senator Blake dashed aboard the steamboat the moment she touched the wharf, and soon had his wife and child in his arms.

He heard from Mrs. Blake's lips how she and Bessie ac-

tually owed their lives to the presence of mind and courage of Jack Haviland, a young fisherman of Holderness village.

She said their rescuer must have gone ashore at Lakeview, for he had not been seen on board after the steamboat left that town.

"I don't know anything about that," replied her husband. "All I know is that I was talking to him on the wharf here about half an hour ago. He is a fine, manly looking chap. He told me that he saved you and Bessie, but refused to give me his name and address when I proposed to reward him for the service."

"You must do something for him, Benton. I should never be satisfied unless he was rewarded for his unselfish action at the moment of our greatest peril."

"Don't worry about that, Laura. I'll take care of the young man."

The Senator had a carriage in waiting, and they were presently being driven homeward.

The reporters did not lose sight of Jack Haviland, and he was interviewed before they allowed him to leave the wharf.

Before he went to dinner that evening Jack sent a dispatch to his mother, assuring her of his safety and telling her he would not be able to return to the village on the Holderness next day, as his presence was required in Milwaukee by the new steamboat company.

He assured her that he would get home as soon as he could, and asked her to arrange with Ben Trawler to make another trip to the fishing grounds with Tom Oliver.

After breakfast next morning Jack went to the reading-room of the hotel and read the different accounts in the papers of the loss of the Sylph.

At ten o'clock a messenger from the steamboat people called for him and took him to the general offices of the company, where he was introduced to the board of directors, and before whom he repeated the story he had told to President Douglas.

His story was listened to with mingled amazement and some incredulity.

The production of the letter by Mr. Douglas, and the boy's honest and straightforward manner, however, produced a strong impression in the end, and a resolution was adopted looking to the thorough sifting of the disastrous affair, and the punishment of the guilty persons if the crime could be brought to their door.

Up to the moment that Jack left the city, two days later, on the Holderness, for his home, Mr. Amos Flint had not been captured, although the police of Chicago and other cities and towns had been instructed to watch for him.

It was noticed that Isaac Naylor wore a satisfied smile since he heard the news about the loss of the Sylph; but if he thought the opposition company had been driven out of business thereby he was grievously disappointed, for the Milwaukee Steamboat Company before the week was out had secured another steamer, and was running her on the

Sylph's schedule, just as if nothing had happened to upset the arrangements they had made for the season.

Jack found that his fishing business had gone on all right under the combined attention of Ben Trawler and Tom Oliver, and he handed Ben a liberal compensation for services rendered.

"Levi Dyke has been prowlin' around lookin' for you," said Tom to Jack, on the morning following his return to Holderness.

"Has he? Well, I'm not surprised. He's got it in for me on account of the slip I gave him the other day on the cliffs."

"He won't trouble you now for some time to come," continued Tom.

"Why not?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"Because he had a fall among the rocks yesterday mornin' and broke his leg. He can't move out of the house."

"I can't say that I sympathize with him much. He's a big brute, and that son of his is a chip of the old block. I wish I could get Gypsy away from them. It is no sort of home for her."

"That's right, it isn't," nodded Tom. "I don't see that they have any great claim on her."

"They raised her from a little thing; but it's been a pretty tough raising. It has been a mystery to me how she stood it."

"S'posin' they have raised her? She's worked mighty hard for all she's got from them, which ain't been much."

"She's been a regular slave for the whole family, and it makes my blood boil to think of the way Sam bulldozes her around. Some day I'll do him up in a way he'll remember for the balance of his life," said Jack, resolutely.

When the young fisherman returned from his next trip to the fishing grounds he found a letter awaiting him at the post-office.

It bore the Milwaukee post-mark and the imprint of the Wisconsin State Senate.

Jack easily guessed who it was from, and he opened it with some curiosity.

The writer, Senator Benton Blake, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Jack Haviland for saving his wife and daughter from the late steamboat disaster, and he insisted on doing something handsome for the boy.

He requested Jack to indicate how he could be useful to him in helping him ahead in the world.

"The obligation I and my family are under to you, my lad," he wrote, "is something that I never really can repay, but I wish to do what I can toward pushing you on to success in whatever line your talents and ambition call for."

Jack answered the letter, thanked the Senator for what he called his generous offer, and said he would consider the matter.

The boy's present ambition was to get ahead in the fishing business, and he was succeeding even better than he had ever hoped for at the start.

He practically controlled now the entire local summer

supply of Holderness, which was a considerable item in its way.

But he did not intend to stop at that.

His idea was to acquire by degrees a small fishing fleet and get a corner on the Milwaukee trade as well.

In fact, in his mind's eye, he eventually intended to reach out and become the fishing magnate of Lake Michigan, and in the end dominate even the Chicago market.

Of course this would require the expenditure of a great deal of money, but would be proportionately profitable.

He expected to make his way on to success by degrees—slow and sure.

Though it might take years to accomplish the object of his dreams, he intended to get there if it was possible for energy and enterprise to achieve it.

To such a boy there was no such word as "fail" in his dictionary.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH THE LITTLE FOUNDLING COMES INTO HER OWN.

About ten days after the steamboat catastrophe Mrs. Blake and Bessie returned to their cottage at Holderness, and the Senator accompanied them.

Of course Jack had to call on them as soon as he could.

He was invited to take dinner with them on the first Sunday after their return.

The Senator took advantage of the opportunity to sound the boy concerning his future prospects.

Jack told him how he had taken up the fishing business where his father left off, for the family looked to him for its support, and had succeeded in pushing it beyond a mere living—in fact, to a point where he was making quite a handsome profit during the summer.

He went on to outline his plans to secure the Milwaukee trade and eventually that of the Chicago market.

"I have little doubt but you will succeed, Haviland, even if you have to rely entirely on your own resources. But in these days, when everything goes ahead at a livelier rate than formerly, a little help forward should not be despised."

"I don't want any help, sir," replied the boy, resolutely. "I can hoe my own row without any outside assistance. There is a slight more satisfaction in working your own way on to success than in having somebody else land you in the butter tub, as mother calls it."

"That's all very well, Haviland, as far as the sentiment goes," replied the politician, "and would apply better to the times a quarter of a century ago than to the present day, when everything is done with a rush. One must accommodate one's self to his surroundings. Your plan of working up to such a big proposition as you have in view is a bit out of date. Long before it would be possible for you to come within speaking distance of your goal, through your own unaided efforts, some other smart person, discerning your purpose, would step in, discount you by a liberal

expenditure of hard cash, and acquire the monopoly you were seeking. I don't tell you this to discourage you at the outset, but to put the situation squarely before you as things exist to-day. Now, I like to see a boy of your progressive ideas get ahead. What is the matter with you doing it in the most up-to-date and successful way? You have the executive ability to succeed. All you really need is the sinews of war—that is, the ready cash. Very well—let me be your banker. I owe you more than I can even express in mere words. Besides, I am bound to say that I have taken an uncommon interest in this scheme of yours. I want to make a young captain of industry of you. Remember, I am not trying to rob you of any of the glory of your enterprise. Whether or not you achieve ultimate success will depend entirely on yourself, not on my money. If I did not believe you possessed the latent power of a good organizer and director I would not suggest my present plan, which is that, with my financial and political backing, you start in at once to secure the fishing monopoly of Lake Michigan. Let us now consider how this can best be accomplished."

The Senator then proceeded to get Jack's ideas on the subject, after which he outlined a plan for the boy to follow, showing him how his political influence could be brought to bear with advantage, and how his money would enable Haviland to put the business on a basis that must soon stifle competition.

Having accepted Senator Blake's co-operation, he proceeded to set the machinery in motion without delay.

Before he had more than looked over the ground a telegraph dispatch summoned him to Milwaukee.

Amos Flint had been arrested in St. Louis and brought on by detectives.

Jack took the new company's boat for Milwaukee, and on his arrival was brought face to face with the rascally clerk.

Mr. Flint was induced to make a full confession of his agency in the destruction of the Sylph, and his sworn statement so incriminated Isaac Naylor that that gentleman was immediately arrested in his elegant house at Holderness.

Both were held for trial.

Mr. Naylor of course obtained his liberty for the time being by giving a substantial bail.

At the subsequent trial he made a big fight, with the assistance of distinguished counsel; but he could not get over the testimony of Mr. Flint, who was permitted to turn State's evidence against his employer.

The result was that Mr. Naylor got a ten-year sentence in the State prison, while Mr. Flint, though the chief actor, under compulsion, was, as per arrangement, let off easy.

Jack, before the close of summer, bought up the most available fishing boats that made their rendezvous at Holderness and started them out in the service of the "Haviland Fishing Company."

The Lake Michigan Navigation Company came under the hammer after its president was landed in prison, and

Senator Blake bought up the franchise, steamer Holderness and other property belonging to the company, and turned the whole over to the management of Jack Haviland, and it nominally became part of the assets of the fishing company, of which Jack was president and general manager.

Just before Senator Blake closed his cottage, in the last days of September, a brother Senator and bosom friend, named George Matthews, came down to Holderness to spend a week at the Blake cottage.

Jack was introduced to him and they seemed to take an immediate liking to each other.

One afternoon the young fisherman took Senator Matthews up the cliffs to show him the spot from which he made his thrilling leap to escape from Levi Dyke and his associates.

On their return down the cliff they suddenly came face to face with Gypsy Dyke.

Senator Matthews came to a sudden stop and gazed at her as if fascinated, while his face turned deathly pale.

Great heaven!" he ejaculated in a tone that at once attracted Jack's attention. "Who is this girl?"

"That's Gypsy Dyke."

"Gypsy Dyke!" repeated the Senator, mechanically. "Heaven above, how like——!"

Haviland misinterpreted the politician's emotion.

"Come here, Gyp," he said, holding out his hand to the girl.

She ran toward our hero with a glad cry, and as he put his arm around her she nestled close to his side.

"Gyp," said Jack, "let me introduce you to Senator Matthews."

The girl gazed shyly at the handsomely dressed and dignified gentleman.

The Senator returned the look with a strange, wistful yearning that surprised Haviland.

"Senator Matthews, this is one of the wild flowers of our fishing village," he said. "She's the best little girl in all the wide world. It's too bad that she is under the control of as big a rascal as is out of jail—he and his son. She is no relative of theirs at all. Only a little foundling who, twelve years ago, came ashore in a box attached to a bit of wreckage, after a big storm on the lake, and Levi Dyke found her cast up among the rocks near his cottage."

"What!" gasped the Senator, in a voice that trembled with emotion. "This child, you say, was picked up along the shore after a wreck twelve years ago?"

"That's right," replied Jack, astonished at his companion's agitation.

"My heavens! Can it be that this is—is——"

He could get no further, while great tears coursed down his cheeks.

"Good gracious, Senator! What is the matter?" asked Jack, while Gypsy regarded the gentleman with wonder.

"Twelve years ago," replied the Senator, in a broken voice, "my wife and little girl, Jessie, were returning to Chicago from a Canadian port in the lake steamboat City of Duluth. The steamer foundered somewhere in mid-

lake and all on board were presumed to have perished. I have mourned my dear ones as dead ever since. But this child, whom you say was cast ashore in this State about that date, is the living image of my wife. Can it be that she is my daughter—the only soul saved from that awful wreck?"

"Great Scott, Senator! Who knows but she is!" cried Jack, greatly excited. "Perhaps Levi Dyke may be able and willing, if you pay him, to give you some clue——"

At that moment the sunlight flashed upon the thin golden chain attached to a locket worn by Gypsy.

With a stifled cry the Senator pounced upon it and drew forth the locket from the nut-brown neck of the little girl.

He pressed a spring and the locket flew open, revealing the face of a lovely woman.

Senator Matthews gazed at it spellbound, then he seized the astonished Gypsy and folded her to his heart.

"My child—my little Jessie! You have come back to me at last. Heaven be thanked!"

It is unnecessary to dwell on this scene.

The reader's imagination will supply all the details, as well as what necessarily followed.

Needless to say that Levi Dyke had to give up Gypsy, though he made a fight against it, and was only finally mollified by a sum of money which he did not in the least deserve.

Jack was sorry to lose Gypsy, but he was pleased beyond measure to know that the child was removed from the evil influences of the Dyke family and transplanted to a position of happiness and affluence.

But Jack did not lose Gypsy altogether.

Five years afterward, when at the head of the great fishing monopoly of Lake Michigan, he visited the home of Senator Matthews, at that gentleman's special request, he found that Jessie Matthews, once little Gypsy Dyke, had never for a moment forgotten the young fisherman of Holderness.

Then and there was born a new love between them that resulted in their marriage a year later. And thus, with their marriage bells ringing in our ears, we bring to a close the story of THE BOY WHO GOT AHEAD.

THE END.

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